



Dracup, Liza (2017) Photographic strategies for visualising the landscape and natural history of Northern England: the ordinary and the extraordinary. Doctoral thesis, University of Sunderland.

Downloaded from: <http://sure.sunderland.ac.uk/id/eprint/7467/>

#### **Usage guidelines**

Please refer to the usage guidelines at <http://sure.sunderland.ac.uk/policies.html> or alternatively contact [sure@sunderland.ac.uk](mailto:sure@sunderland.ac.uk).



**Photographic strategies for visualising the  
landscape and natural history of  
Northern England:  
the ordinary and the extraordinary.**

**Liza Dracup**

A critical commentary and research folder submitted  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
University of Sunderland for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy PhD by Existing Creative Works.

MAY 2017

## Table of Contents

---

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>Abstract</b>  | 10 |
| <b>1. Introduction</b>                                       | 12 |
| 1.1 Research Questions                                       | 20 |
| 1.2 Research Aims  | 20 |
| 1.3 Research Objectives                                      | 21 |
| 1.4 Practice-led Research: Methodology                       | 21 |
| <b>2. Literature Review</b>                                  | 24 |
| 2.1 Introduction   | 24 |
| 2.2 Nature Writing   | 24 |
| 2.3 Contemporary Conflict                                    | 25 |
| 2.4 The Unofficial to Official                               | 27 |
| 2.5 Historical Nature Writing                                | 27 |
| 2.6 Cultures of Night-Light                                  | 28 |
| 2.7 Aesthetics of the Sublime, the Beautiful and the Uncanny | 29 |
| 2.8 Photographers  | 31 |
| <b>3. Case Study 1: <i>Sharpe's Wood</i></b>                 | 36 |
| 3.1 Introduction   | 36 |
| 3.2 Initial Testing Ground                                   | 38 |
| 3.3 Research Outputs   | 39 |
| 3.4 Experimentation with Constraints                         | 39 |
| 3.5 Photographic Visualisation                               | 42 |
| 3.6 Printed Outputs  | 47 |
| 3.7 Peer Review  | 49 |
| 3.8 Summary and Evaluation                                   | 50 |
| <b>4. Case Study 2: <i>Chasing the Gloaming</i></b>          | 53 |
| 4.1 Introduction.  | 53 |
| 4.2 Historic Photographic Visualisation                      | 56 |
| 4.3 Past and Present Landscapes                              | 57 |
| 4.4 Urban Work   | 58 |
| 4.5 Transformational Moonlight                               | 59 |
| 4.6 Studio Based Strategies                                  | 64 |
| 4.7 Archive Research   | 65 |
| 4.8 Developing Non-Camera Digital Strategies                 | 65 |
| 4.9 Printed Outputs  | 70 |
| 4.10 Peer Review   | 70 |
| 4.11 Summary and Evaluation                                  | 73 |
| <b>5. Case Study 3: <i>Re: Collections</i></b>               | 76 |
| 5.1 Starting Points  | 76 |
| 5.2 Context  | 78 |
| 5.3 Studio and Non-Camera Strategies                         | 79 |
| 5.4 Mapping the Displaced                                    | 82 |

|           |  |                |
|-----------|--|----------------|
| 5.5       | Selection of the (Extra) Ordinary                      | 83             |
| 5.6       | Animated Stillness                                     | 85             |
| 5.7       | Transformations and Photographic Theory                | 87             |
| 5.8       | Visualising the (out of the) Ordinary                  | 89             |
| 5.9       | Outputs  | 89             |
| 5.10      | Curatorial Interpretation and Exhibition               | 90             |
| 5.11      | Public and Peer Review                                 | 92             |
| 5.12      | Summary and Evaluation                                 | 95             |
| <b>6.</b> | <b>Summary and Contributions</b>                       | <b>96</b>      |
| 6.1       | Summary and reflection on research aims and objectives | 96             |
| 6.2       | Contributions and Recognition                          | 98             |
| 6.3       | Longer-term research aims                              | 100            |
| 6.4       | Continuing Contributions                               | 101            |
| 6.5       | Future Contributions                                   | 103            |
|           | <b>Bibliography</b>                                    | <b>105-116</b> |

## **List of Abbreviations**

|      |                                     |
|------|-------------------------------------|
| BMG  | Bradford Museums and Galleries      |
| NMM  | National Media Museum               |
| NSC  | Natural Sciences Collections        |
| SSSI | Site of Special Scientific Interest |

## Table of Images:

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Fig.1 Final edit. <i>Untitled. Sharpe's Wood</i> (2007)   | 12 |
| Fig.2 Final edit. <i>Untitled. Sharpe's Wood</i> (2007)   | 36 |
| Fig.3 <i>Illuminate Light Night Festival. Sharpe's Wood</i> Bradford (2006)   | 38 |
| Fig.4 Final edit <i>Untitled. Sharpe's Wood</i> (2007)  | 43 |
| Fig.5 Final edit <i>Untitled. Sharpe's Wood</i> (2007)  | 44 |
| Fig.6 Final edit <i>Untitled. Sharpe's Wood</i> (2007)  | 45 |
| Fig.7 Final edit <i>Untitled. Sharpe's Wood</i> (2007)  | 47 |
| Fig.8 Final research outputs. <i>Sharpe's Wood</i> , Impressions Gallery (2007)   | 48 |
| Fig.9 Final research outputs. <i>Sharpe's Wood</i> . The Bexley Wing. St. James Hospital, Leeds (April-June 2010)                     | 51 |
| Fig.10 Final edit. <i>St. Ives (night) Yorkshire</i> (2010) <i>Chasing the Gloaming</i> (2011)  | 53 |
| Fig.11 Final edit. <i>River Wharfe (night)</i> (2010) <i>Chasing the Gloaming</i> (2011)  | 57 |
| Fig.12 Final edit. <i>Leeds Bridge</i> (2010). <i>Chasing the Gloaming</i> (2011)   | 59 |
| Fig.13 Final edit <i>Moonlight, Whitby.</i> (2010) <i>Chasing the Gloaming</i> (2011)   | 60 |
| Fig.14 Final edit. <i>Whitby (moonlight)</i> 2010) <i>Chasing the Gloaming</i> (2011)   | 62 |
| Fig.15 <i>A Dead Linnet</i> . John Atkinson Grimshaw. (1862-1863) Leeds Art Gallery   | 64 |
| Fig.16 Final edit. <i>The Pheasant.</i> (2010) <i>Chasing the Gloaming</i> (2011)   | 67 |
| Fig.17 Final edit. <i>Gold Circle (moonlight)</i> 2010. <i>Chasing the Gloaming</i> (2011)  | 69 |
| Fig.18 Final research outputs. <i>Chasing the Gloaming</i> (2011)<br>Mercer Art Gallery, Harrogate .                                  | 71 |
| Fig.19 <i>Early Religious paintings, Dutch and Flemish Still Life and Georgian Painting and Old Masters'</i> . York Art Gallery, York | 74 |
| Fig.20 Final edit. <i>Barn Owl. Tyto alba Re: Collections</i> (2013)  | 76 |
| Fig.21 Initial research bagged specimens at 'the stores'.   | 77 |
| Fig.22 Final edit. <i>Badger. Re: Collections</i> (2013)  | 81 |
| Fig.23 Final edit. <i>Woodmouse. Re: Collections</i> (2013)   | 83 |
| Fig.24 Initial research. A box of exotica at 'the stores'.  | 84 |
| Fig.25 Final edit. <i>Stoat Re: Collections</i> (2013)  | 85 |
| Fig.26 Final edit. <i>Greenfinch and Weasel. Re: Collections</i> 2013   | 86 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Fig.27 Final research outputs. The Manor House, Ilkley.<br>(17 December 2013 – 5 March 2014) | 91  |
| Fig.28 Final edit. Street Level Photoworks, Glasgow<br>(30 January 2016 – 27 March 2016)     | 92  |
| Fig.29 <i>Ilkley Moor (night)</i> 2016. <i>Landmarks</i> (2016)                              | 101 |

## **7. Research Evidence. Existing creative work (memory stick):**

### **7.1 Case Study 1: *Sharpe's Wood***

7.2 Digital portfolio final 34 outputs (2007)

7.3 Installation photographs. *Sharpe's Wood*. Impressions Gallery (18th Aug to 07th Oct 2007)

7.4 Installation photographs. *Sharpe's Wood*. The Bexley Wing, St. James Hospital, Leeds (April to June 2010)

7.5 Installation photographs. *Sharpe's Wood*. P.M. Gallery, London (13 November 2010 to 8 January 2011)

7.6 P.M. Gallery - *Sharpe's Wood*. Publicity and press (peer review)(13 November 2010 to 8 January 2011)

7.7 P.M. Gallery – *Sharpe's Wood*. Comments book (public review)(13 November 2010 to 8 January 2011)

7.8 Impressions Gallery. *Sharpe's Wood*. Exhibition video. [Online]. Available: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bo9daY8QUcA> [accessed on 12 April 2015]

7.9 Installation photographs. *Sharpe's Wood*. *Northern Landscape*. Sheffield Gallery. Sheffield Hallam University (2016).

### **8. Case Study 2: *Chasing the Gloaming***

8.1 Portfolio final research 21 outputs (2011)

8.2 Installation photographs Mercer Gallery (16 April 2011 to 4 September 2011)

8.3 Installation photographs The Guildhall, City of London (19 September 2011 to 15 January 2012)

8.4 Installation photographs York Art Gallery (January 2013 to January 2014)

8.5 Installation photographs Cliffe Castle, Keighley (2014 - to date)

8.6 Atkinson Grimshaw: A Painter of Moonlight. (2011) [Online]. Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WWIKzCA-9EI> [19 September 2016]

### **9. Case Study 3: *Re: Collections***

9.1 Portfolio final research 24 outputs (2013)

9.2 Installation photographs. Manor House, Ilkley (14 December 2013 to 2 March 2014)

9.3 Exhibition labels/titles for *Re: Collections* (Manor House and Street Level Photoworks)

9.4 Installation photographs. Street Level Photoworks, Glasgow (30 January 2016 to 27 March 2016)

9.5 Street Level Photoworks. *Re: Collections*. (2016) [Online]. Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7OKGGtUnIyI> [19 September 2016]

9.6 Street Level Photoworks. *Re: Collections*. (2016) Comments book, selected public review. (30 January 2016 to 27 March 2016)

## **10. Additional evidence: Case Study 1. *Sharpe's Wood***

10.1 The Culture Company. (14 February 2003 to 6 April 2003) *One Landscape Many Views. Unseen*. Liza Dracup. The Culture Company, Leeds. (n.p.)

- 10.2 Impressions Gallery. (2007) *Liza Dracup. Sharpe's Wood*. Impress Publication. Impressions Gallery. Bradford.
- 10.3 Impressions Gallery. (2007) *Liza Dracup. Sharpe's Wood*. (18 August 2007 to 7 October 2007) Exhibition publicity material.
- 10.4 Impressions Gallery. (2007) *Liza Dracup. Sharpe's Wood*. Touring exhibition.
- 10.5 Impressions Gallery. (2007) *Liza Dracup. Sharpe's Wood*. (18 August 2007 to 7 October 2007) Comments book, selected public review. Impressions Gallery, Bradford.
- 10.6 Leach E. (ed.) (2007) 'The Gallery', Yorkshire Life. October 2007, pp. 67 -72
- 10.7 Leach E. (ed.) (2007) 'If you go down to the woods tonight', Yorkshire Life November 2007, pp. 138 -140
- 10.8 Charmers G. (ed.) '*Sharpe's Wood*'. Portfolio Catalogue. June (2007) Vol.45, pp. 40 – 43
- 10.9 BBC. (2007) Made in England. First Impressions in Bradford.  
[http://bbc.co.uk/bradford/content/articles/2007/08/07/impressions\\_opening\\_bradford](http://bbc.co.uk/bradford/content/articles/2007/08/07/impressions_opening_bradford) [11 January 2010]
- 10.10 British Journal of Photography. 20.06.07 NEWS. 'First Impressions in Bradford', p. 21
- 10.11 Hereford Photography Festival Twenty. (2010) Festival catalogue. *Sharpe's Wood* 22<sup>nd</sup> October - 27<sup>th</sup> November 2010, p.7
- 10.12 Steward, S. Review. Hereford Photography Festival. 10 November 2010 [Online]. Available: <http://www.theartsdesk.com/visual-arts/herford-photography-festival> accessed on [12 April 2015]
- 10.13 LANDeSCAPE NORTH exhibition. *Sharpe's Wood*. (Selected works). Flannels, Leeds (23 October 2013 to 12 January 2014)
- 10.14 McNeill, A. (2014). *Photoworks. The One that Got Away*. Liza Dracup. 8.12.14. [Online]. Available: <http://photoworks.org.uk/liza-dracup/> [18 January 2016]
- 10.15 McNeill, A. and Oldfield, P. (2015) *The Bigger Picture*. Impressions Gallery, Bradford, pp. 19, 26-27, 55 & 74
- 10.16 Sheffield Hallam University (2016) *Northern Light: Landscape Photography and Evocations of the North*. Conference programme. <https://northernlight2016.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/northern-light-programme1.pdf> [25 September 2016]

## **11 Additional Evidence (box): Case Study 2. *Chasing the Gloaming*.**

11.1 Sellars, J. (ed.) (2011) *Atkinson Grimshaw. Painter of Moonlight*. Mercer Art Gallery. Harrogate Borough Council, pp. 151 – 169

11.2 Mercer Art Gallery. Comments book, selected public review. (16 April 2011 to 4 September 2011) Mercer Art Gallery, Harrogate.

11.3 McFarnon, E. Arts & Entertainment, Liza Dracup captures the beauty of moonlight on film. *The Independent*. 22 April 2011[Online]. Available: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/features/liza-dracup-captures-the-beauty-of-moonlight-on-film-2269895.html> [12 April 2015]

11.4 Leach E. (ed.) (2011) 'Gallery Page. *Chasing the Gloaming*', *Yorkshire Life*, March, pp. 220 – 222

11.5 Sellars, J. (ed.) (2014) *Art and Yorkshire From Turner to Hockney*. Mercer Art Gallery. Harrogate Borough Council, p. 46

11.6 Sellars, J. (2015) *A Women's Work: Women Artists in The Harrogate Fine Art Collection*. The Mercer Art Gallery. Harrogate Borough Council, pp. 86 -87

## **12 Research Evidence: *Re: Collections***

12.1 Bradford Council (2013) Press release. 'Photographer's response to Bradford's Natural Sciences Collection.' [Online]. Available: <http://www.bradford.gov.uk/bmdc/> [3 March 2014]

12.2 Bradford Museums and Galleries (2013) *Re: Collections*. Exhibition Interpretation. Manor House, Ilkley.

12.3 Dracup, L. (2013) *Re: Collections*. Exhibition Catalogue. Self published. Bradford.

12.4 *Re: Collections*. (2013) Comments book, selected public review. (14 December 2013 to 2 March 2014) Manor House, Ilkley.

12.5 *Yorkshire Life* (2014) January Edition. The Gallery. A unique photographic collection reveals a fascinating study of wildlife conservation', pp. 74-75

12.6 *The Independent*.(2013) 'Taxidermied animals reawakened in new photographs by Liza Dracup', 17.12.13 [Online]. Available: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/features/taxidermied-animals-reawakened-in-new-photographs-by-liza-dracup-9011194.html> [4 March 2014]

12.7 *The Independent*. Radar Magazine (2014) 18.1.14 'Museums. Portraits of frozen memories', p.5



12.8 Lewis, W. (2014) *Light in the Darkness – An Interview with Photographer, Liza Dracup*. WALK. University of Sunderland's Walking, Art, Landskip and Knowledge research group [Online]. Available: <http://walk.uk.net/portfolio/light-in-the-darkness-an-interview-with-liza-dracup> [1 September 2014]

12.9 Herrmann, P. (2015) Smith, E. (ed.) (Essay) Look/15/ Have You Seen Look/15. Liverpool International Photography Festival (Brochure), pp. 17-19

12.10 University of Cumbria (2015) *Visualising the Animal. Re: Collections*. Liza Dracup. Conference catalogue, pp.20, n.p.

12.11 Redeye. (2015) *Landscape Photography Now*. 21.11.16  
*Re: Collections*, Kendal Mountain Festival.

12.12 The Herald Magazine. (2016) 30 January 2016 'Portfolio. Barn Owl Liza Dracup', n.p.

### **13. Continuing Contributions:**

13.1 Dracup, L. (2016) *Landmarks*. Mercer Art Gallery, Harrogate.

13.2 Yorkshire Post. (2016) 13.9.16. 'Victorian inspiration for landmark photo exhibition', p. 13

13.3 Northern Light: Landscape Photography and Evocations of the North. Sheffield Hallam University. (July 4 2016 – July 5 2016) [Online]. Available: <https://www4.shu.ac.uk/sia/events/event-listing.html?event=200> [24 September 2016]

13.4 Document Scotland Blog. (2016) Northern Light. Contemporary Landscape Photography 4-31 July 2016. [Online]. Available: <http://www.documentsscotland.com/tag/liza-dracup/> [5 September 2016]

13.5 Hepworth Gallery, Wakefield. Photographic Workshop. 2 February 2016 [Online]. Available: <http://www.hepworthwakefield.org/whatson/evening-photography-workshop-with-liza-dracup/> [24 September 2016]

## **Abstract:**

This critical commentary reviews and contextualises existing research on *Photographic strategies for visualising the landscape and natural history of Northern England: the ordinary and the extraordinary*. The commentary examines three major bodies of photographic work that have each been publicly disseminated as major exhibitions, *Sharpe's Wood* (2007) nominated for the Prix Pictet (Earth) Photography Award (2009), *Chasing the Gloaming* (2011) nominated for the Deutsche Börse and *Re: Collections* (2013). Each case study has been subject to critical peer and public review and this is evaluated in the commentary and a comprehensive box of evidential research material is presented to support the practice-led research submission.

The commentary positions the practice-led enquiry against the overall research aims and objectives. The research focus has made a significant contribution to landscape photographic discourse, through experimental and transformational analogue and digital photographic methodologies (camera and non-camera) in the visualisation of the hidden and unseen aspects of the landscape and natural history of the north of England.

The commentary frames and highlights the wide-ranging historical collections based research across photographic, artistic and science disciplines, and it tracks their impact on the research trajectory and on my contemporary photographic practice. Photographic critical thinking (Walter Benjamin and Roland Barthes) supported the theoretical research aims; their ideas provided critical filters for practice-led experiments with camera and non-camera *seeing* and the aim of visualising the hidden through experimental photographic methodologies. Historical and contemporary nature writing also informed the photographic research trajectory, specifically with ideas around the locale within a wider cultural context and ideas around the (lost) meaning of landscape.

The resulting research outputs have culminated in an examination of the wider cultural value of the ordinary and the local landscape visualised photographically.

Liza Dracup PhD. Ex. supervised by Dr Carol McKay and Professor Arabella Plouviez.

## 1. Introduction:

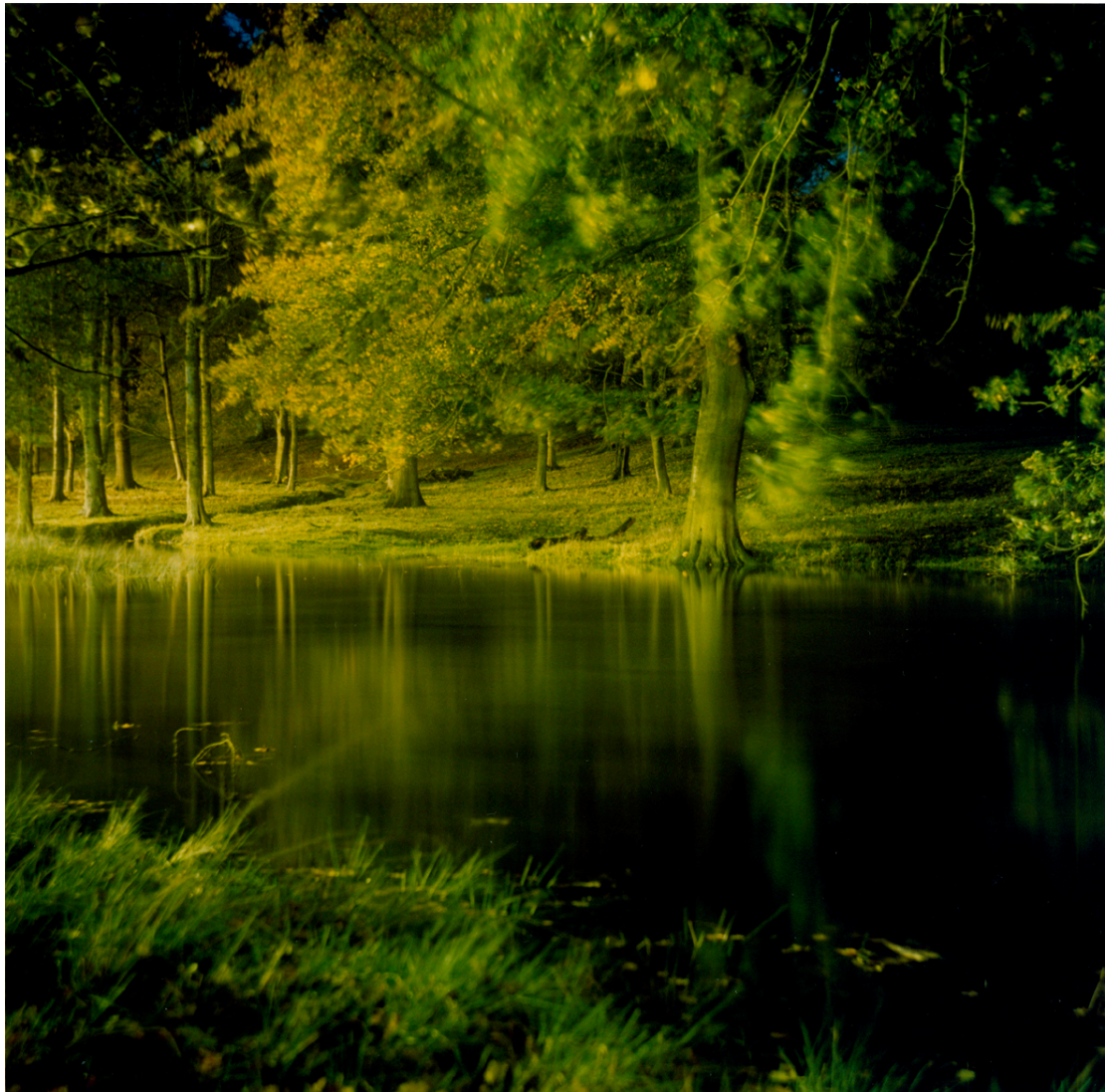


Fig.1. Final edit. *Untitled. Sharpe's Wood* (2007)

This critical commentary will review and contextualise existing research on *Photographic strategies for visualising the landscape and natural history of Northern England: the ordinary and the extraordinary*. This research enquiry is comprised of three major bodies of photographic work (Case Studies 1-3) that have each been publicly disseminated as major exhibitions with accompanying publications:

- *Sharpe's Wood* (2007), nominated for the Prix Pictet (Earth) Photography Award (2009).

- *Chasing the Gloaming* (2011), nominated for the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize (2012).
- *Re: Collections* (2013).

The commissioning galleries, regional and national institutions and the Arts Council England sponsored and supported the bodies of work.

The outcomes of the photographic research exist or have existed in the public realm. The three bodies of work have made a significant contribution through experimental analogue and digital photographic strategies (camera and non-camera) that re-visualise the landscape and the natural history of northern England. In doing so, the research explores overlaps between photography and painting with particular reference to the aesthetics of the sublime, beautiful and uncanny. In case studies two and three, the research also re-positions existing natural history archives and Victorian art-photography collections within a contemporary photographic context and for contemporary audiences.

All three case studies are underpinned by questioning how photography, made in response to specific (northern) landscapes and natural histories, could operate within the field of landscape aesthetics and with regard to wider cultural debates about the value of 'local' environmental perspectives. Consideration of relevant photographic discourse and theory is embedded within the case study chapters, while wider non-photographic content on natural history and aesthetics is contextualised in the literature review.

The critical thinking of Walter Benjamin and Roland Barthes in particular underpin the theoretical research aims and objectives. Their ideas were critical filters for my evaluations of the camera and non-camera photographic *seeing* and visualising of the hidden through experimental photographic methodologies. As will be seen, historical and contemporary nature writing also informed the photographic research trajectory with ideas around the local within a wider cultural context and ideas around the (lost) meaning of landscape.

As can be seen from the accompanying portfolio of evidence, the photographic and contextual research outputs have been publicly disseminated through touring exhibitions, publications, exhibition literature, national and regional specialist and non-specialist press coverage, academic and gallery artist talks, academic conferences, documented peer and public review. The Web has further facilitated a digital dissemination through artist, gallery and newspaper websites, making the work accessible to both national and international audiences. Selected exhibition material is held in all the commissioning gallery collections (publicly accessible) and selected pieces are on permanent display. Peer and curatorial review have further contributed to the development and context of my practice.

This commentary will identify and contextualise my contributions to the field of critically-engaged landscape photography. The research results as photographs can offer descriptions and capture illuminations that evade direct observation, by using photographic strategies that reveal a vision unavailable to the eye. The photographs require close inspection and could be considered to reveal the more hidden qualities of the landscape and its natural histories: qualities that are emphasised and revealed by the experimental use of photographic optical devices, such as the traditional optics of a camera lens or the camera-less lens of the photographic scanner. These photographic devices transform specific selected landscape-based material.

The Ordnance Survey uses the singular cartographical terms Grid, True and Magnetic to precede the word North (Ordnance Survey: 2017). These couplets are necessary for navigation, to establish a position, or as a means of direction and orientation. This critical commentary titled *Photographic Strategies for Visualising the Northern Landscape: the ordinary and the extraordinary* examines and documents an alternative means of positioning the North. In providing an overview and context for the three photographic Case Studies and their adopted methodologies, the commentary locates my place as researcher and positions my relationship with the northern landscape. In *The Idea of North* (2016), Peter Davidson discusses the shifting position and subjectivity of 'True North':

... wherever it is located, it points always to a further north, to an elsewhere. It is multiple: every potential owner will be using it to plot their own apprehension of north, to frame the place that is north for them. (Davidson, 2016: 9)

As this suggests, the concept of the north is much contested and debated. This diversity of opinion can be identified in the much referenced text of John Taylor's *A Dream of England: Landscape, Photography and the Tourist's Imagination* (1994) and in Martin Wainwright's *True North: In Praise of England's Better Half* (2009). Opinions can be polarised and this opens up conflicting descriptions and interpretations. Ideas of the northern landscape and artistic responses to the northern landscape are equally diverse. My own research trajectory positions the north within personal, cultural and historical contexts, so aligning with Davidson's ideas around the multiple nature of 'the north.' I was born in the north and continue to live and work in [my] north. These long established personal ties, in particular to Bradford, in turn underpin my personal connections to the northern landscape and these personal connections can be identified across each of the Case Studies presented. Case Study one directly and deliberately linked the research to a particular place of childhood (*Sharpe's Wood*). Case Study two (*Chasing the Gloaming*) developed a direct connection with a historical and widely respected artist J.A. Grimshaw, while maintaining a sub-strata of more personal connections to the places photographed. The title of Case Study three (*Re: Collections*) could be interpreted in two ways, with reference to the collections- based research that underpinned it and through recollection as personal and collective memory. As will be seen, the interweaving of personal and shared cultural memory is an important aspect of my research. As such, memory is mediated through specific photographic strategies that in turn are positioned in relation to specific historical, cultural and archival northern contexts; in this regard my research specifically seeks to avoid what Davidson refers to as 'benign' or nostalgic descriptions of the north by northerners. (Davidson, 2016: 215)

The northern landscape has long been the inspiration for artists and writers whose work also reaches beyond the nostalgic. Four of the Brontë siblings were born on the edge of Bradford (Thornton) before moving to Haworth. Haworth and the surrounding landscape was a place I frequently visited as a photography student. Emily Brontë's book *Wuthering Heights* draws us into her narrative backdrop of a dark and bleak hostile northern moor. Her stories have permeated this specific northern landscape and her legacy has left a sense of place that extends beyond an immediate physical or geographic location. The legacy of her creative ideas endures and still taps into a deep seam of human connection to this particular northern landscape. Emily Brontë's connections to her West Yorkshire landscape align with my own landscape influences in the transition from a personal imaginative perspective that connects to a wider collective imagination.

Another important personal reference relates to the globally renowned Cottingley Fairy photographs made near Bradford (close to my family home) that captivated and bemused professionals and public alike in the early twentieth century. At the time some saw them as authentic evidence of fairies' existence rather than the playful imagination of two young girls who naively took advantage of photography's inherent contradictory language to blur the line between fact and fiction. By fashioning and placing cut out paper fairies in Cottingley Dell, an ordinary northern landscape was made extraordinary through youthful imagination and the wider public desire to believe in the supernatural. The original green belt site of the photographs is now overlooked and overshadowed by a large housing development. Yet, the housing planners and developers acknowledge and signpost its fictional cultural past with Shakespearian road names, such as Oberon Way, Lysander Close and Tatiana Close: a now tenuous and nostalgic association as the development dominates the once rural landscape 'inhabited' by *The Cottingley Fairies*.

As this example suggests, a very local photographic mythology continues to have a national and international cultural position. The imaginative significance of *The Cottingley Fairies* is more fully demonstrated in my discussion of Case Study one



(*Sharpe's Wood*). The ideas that tie and bind my north are similarly based on and around an intuitive and subjective personal connection to the northern landscape.

As this suggests, the research commentary presented here positions the north within a local, national and international photographic context, whilst acknowledging the subjective aspects of my engagement throughout. The title of the commentary, *Photographic Strategies for Visualising the Northern Landscape: the ordinary and the extraordinary* also alludes to my research-led exploration of the imaginary and transformative possibilities of photography. The commentary identifies how, through exploratory photographic strategies, characteristics within a landscape, which could be considered familiar (or merely local) can be photographically and aesthetically transformed so as resonate more widely with viewers both nationally and internationally.

The first case study *Sharpe's Wood* established a photographic pathway around the ideas of the local landscape, personal connection and memory. It was important to me that the woodland's exact location remained a secret for over a decade (only to be named and identified in this commentary). The decision not to identify the site helped position the photographs within an imaginary context and enabled viewers to connect with their own woodland and memories. As will be seen, the local and personal threads continued into the subsequent case studies *Chasing the Gloaming* and *Re: Collections*. However, the scope and breath of the northern context also widened out through on-going peer review and curatorial intervention, leading to a more informed, comprehensive and enriched idea of the northern landscape and its natural history: always underpinned by the subtext of the personal.

*Sharpe's Wood* (2007) is a site-specific research project commissioned by Impressions Gallery, Bradford and based on a period of experimentation into the ways in which photography could re-visualise a night-time landscape. As will be seen, photography revealed a local woodland once partially obscured by the night. The resulting photographic outputs were visualisations revealed by the

camera as *witness*, as the analogue film captured the night light that extended beyond human vision.

The second case study *Chasing the Gloaming* (2011) commissioned by the Mercer Art Gallery, Harrogate extended the research with night-time photography (long exposures) to various locations across the north of England. The site selections this time had to relate directly or indirectly to the work of Victorian painter John Atkinson Grimshaw. As will be seen, my research adapted to respond to an established vision of another artist and amalgamating our visions into original works of art, without parody. In the later stages of the research, I expanded my methodologies to incorporate experimental studio based digital research, working with study skin<sup>1</sup> bird specimens sourced from BMG Natural Sciences Collections.

The third case study is *Re: Collections* (2013) an artist in residence research project commissioned by Bradford Museums and Galleries (BMG) to respond to their Natural Sciences Collections. I initially worked across numerous diverse collections before focusing my research on British wildlife vertebrate specimens. By extending the digital methodologies developed in the previous project the research aimed to re-position the collection's original scientific and historic context into the arts. As will be seen, the lifelike and timeless qualities constructed and *fixed* by the taxidermist are further transformed by photography. The static avian and mammalian specimens are photographically re-positioned within a contemporary arts context.

All the three case studies have researched and tested out strategies that capitalise on the transformational qualities of photography. These strategies present us with paradoxes that extend beyond human vision, as photography can place emphasis on the extraordinary properties of the ordinary and reveal hidden or unseen aspects. The research explored photographic strategies that convert, alter and translate the three dimensional visual experience into a two

---

<sup>1</sup> Study skin specimens are mounted on wooden sticks for easy handling and for scientific study purposes.

dimensional photographic interpretation. In other words, the research outputs in all three case studies explore, test and extend photography's inherent re-visualising qualities and in doing so enable us to *see* the world differently.

All three case studies have toured the UK with *Sharpe's Wood* (2007) being the inaugural exhibition at Impressions Gallery<sup>2</sup> in the new purpose built space in Bradford and subsequently exhibited in a non-traditional art environment.<sup>3</sup> *Chasing the Gloaming* (2011) opened at The Mercer Arts Gallery<sup>4</sup> alongside the exhibition *John Atkinson Grimshaw a Victorian 'Painter of Moonlight'*, after an extensive refurbishment of the gallery. *Re: Collections* opened at The Manor House Ilkley (2013) before touring to Street Level Photoworks Glasgow (2016).

The photographic experimentation, research and development phases for each of the three case studies will be evaluated in the commentary. The commentary will clarify and identify at which particular points photographic strategies were transformed, modified or revised and adapted to each case study. In each instance, I will evidence how my practice is innovative even when using and re-purposing conventional photographic apparatus. I will cross-reference the research aims and qualify them with evidence of experimentation, investigational research methodology, photographic strategies, documented peer review, published and exhibited outputs.

The supporting research and research outputs (2006 – 2016) form the basis of this critical commentary's enquiry on the photographic visualisation of the landscape and natural history of northern England. The final section of this commentary concludes with a brief consideration of the on going and future research including *Landmarks* (2016), an exhibition and publication commission from the Mercer Art Gallery, Harrogate.

---

<sup>2</sup> Impressions Gallery opened in York 1972 the first photographic gallery outside London.

<sup>3</sup> *Sharpe's Wood* exhibited in the Atrium Gallery, Bexley Wing, Leeds General Infirmary (2010) and one of the final research outputs (at the time of writing) is on permanent display at Leeds Bradford International Airport.

<sup>4</sup> The Mercer Art Gallery, Harrogate was shortlisted for Museums & Heritage Awards (2012).

### **1.1 Research Questions:**

1. How can new photographic strategies visualise and transform the landscape and natural history of northern England?
2. What can experimental analogue and digital strategies contribute to photographic language and discourse of landscape and natural history?

### **1.2 Research aims:**

1. To investigate and develop relevant photographic strategies that re-visualise and reveal the hidden and unseen aspects of the landscape/natural history of northern England. (CS 1-3)
2. To investigate relevant photographic discourse and theory concerned with visualising the hidden and how photography has enabled us to see and understand the world differently. (Lit Review and CS 1-3)
3. To explore relationships between experimental photographic strategies and historical painting and photography, with reference to the aesthetic dimensions of the sublime, beautiful and uncanny. (CS 1-3)
4. To investigate, transform and adapt traditional processes/pioneering photographic experimentation in contemporary context. (CS 2-3)
5. To examine the wider cultural issues in terms of the value of the ordinary and the local/regional landscape with reference to traditions of historical and contemporary nature writing. (Lit Review and CS 1-3)
6. To evaluate the success of these new photographic strategies against peer and public review. (CS 1-3)

### **1.3 Research objectives:**

1. To photographically explore nightlight (natural and artificial) through extended exposure. (CS 1 and 2)
2. To explore non-camera strategies that photographically adapt and re-visualise northern landscape and natural history. (CS 2 and 3)
3. To explore working experimentally within constraints and limitations. (CS 1-3)
4. To investigate traditional and digital print outputs that further visualise the unseen. (CS 1-3)
5. To investigate aspects of historic (Victorian and European) photographic and artistic processes via collections-based research. (CS 2 and 3)
6. To develop contemporary photographic reinterpretations of natural history collections. (CS 2 and 3)

### **1.4 Practice-led research: Methodology:**

The research methodologies combined contextual and theoretical strands of investigation with experimental practice-led research. The research context and underpinning conceptual framework were fused from photographic and non-photographic sources and fed back into a wider research loop, as the practice-led research tested out elements of photographic discourse and ideas. Archival and collections-based research was a further important aspect of the methodological process. (See Case Studies 1-3)

As the above suggests, research methodologies were emergent, systematic and multi-layered: however, the experimental nature of the practice-led research also involved serendipity, chance and intuition as well as conscious design. For

example, research could be re-directed by a new commission opportunity, peer review or by working within specific photographic constraints that led to unanticipated outcomes and effects that in turn required further experimental investigation. In other words, the research process is artistic (intuitive and responsive to chance/serendipity), but is also highly controlled and professional. The research, in part instigated by photographic commissions and by the on-going research questions, led to investigations and reflections on the research objectives. The testing out of various experimental photographic strategies may also be described as an organic process that grew and developed through reflective judgements and by a trial and error process.

In 2002 and 2003 I attended workshops directed by Thomas Joshua Cooper at Inversnaid Photography Centre, Scotland. Aspects of Cooper's methodology and photographic approach to the landscape chimed with my own practice-led research. For example, he defined his use of long exposure as: 'using a technique to create a condition'. (Cooper, 2003) In the same workshop he discussed how photographic methodology (technique) should be 'invisible' to the viewer for example, the work should have an ambiguous quality and not reveal the method of making.

As will be seen, the veil of methodological ambiguity is evident across the case studies and this is echoed in the peer and public review. This is an interesting visual paradox as contemporary photography still has the capacity to beguile and intrigue both the viewer and the photographer. The complexities and latitude of photographic visual language is explored using experimental photographic methodology as an investigational tool to contribute to a wider photographic discourse.

The three case studies presented here are part of a wider research practice; they are selected and presented here as they best demonstrate the interconnected nature of the strands of research and their development over time. Each case study has evolved to address different aspects of [my] northern landscape and its natural history and each examines in different ways the relationship between

the personal, historic and collective north through experimental photographic practice. In other words, the photographic methodology developed for each case study has its own fingerprint, however continuity and transferable approaches are evident throughout the research. Each case study combines the personal with more collective and cultural aspects of the northern landscape and natural history.

Each case study explores how contemporary photographic ideas can be utilised to present a newness and strangeness to a familiar subject, through the development and testing of experimental photographic strategies. These investigational research strands challenge existing traditional ideas of the north and address my individual relationship to the north. The research provokes and prompts questions within and beyond the frame, through exhibition, publication and digital discourse (internet). The wider research trajectory reveals and binds interconnected associations and threads linked through a personal and professional pathway. Furthermore, the research is unified by adaptable on-going experimental photographic methodologies, for example, through the use of digital and analogue strategies (extended exposure) camera and non-camera capture to reveal a newness to the subject and the updating of the historical context of collections-based research. These investigational photographic methodologies collectively track a unique and original pathway, so addressing the overall research title and underpinning my contribution to landscape photography.

At the time of writing a decade has passed since Impressions Gallery moved to Bradford, and Anne McNeill (Director) and Angela Sheard (Programme Co-ordinator) of Impressions Gallery are curating *Field Work*. This ten year retrospective of my work includes outputs from the three case studies and more recent research work, a further demonstration of the interconnectiveness of [my] northern landscape research.

## **2. Literature review:**

### **2.1 Introduction:**

The Literature Review focuses on the wider contexts of the research, including nature writing, historical and contemporary landscape aesthetics, and our cultural sensibilities to night-light (artificial and natural). Relevant aspects of photographic theory and discourse are addressed more fully in the Case Studies, particularly with Benjamin's photographic unconscious and Barthes notion around the paradox of the photographic real. This chapter concludes with a brief overview of relevant photographers whose work resonates with the research aims, in terms of exploring their local landscape/natural history and collections-based research.

### **2.2 Nature Writing:**

Robert Macfarlane (2015) points to a list of 'nature' related words now deleted from the new *Oxford Junior Dictionary*, as they are deemed irrelevant in a child's vocabulary today. He writes:

The deletions included acorn, adder, ash, beech, bluebell, buttercup, catkin, conker, cowslip, dandelion, fern, hazel ... kingfisher  
... otter, pasture, willow. (Macfarlane. 2015, p. 3)

As will be seen, many of these selected words (above) are relevant to my practice-led research and my photography has visualised this *disappearing* nature in different ways. For example, I made photographs from items in the Bradford Museums and Galleries zoology collection, including otter and kingfisher specimens, which became part of *Re: Collections* (see Case Study 3). The initial research for *Sharpe's Wood* started in a predominantly beech area and the site has oaks (acorns) and currently supports a re-introduction of hazel and



many other native species<sup>5</sup>. The woodland is also an educational site for the 'groups, long term unemployed, youth groups, schools and colleges, established environment groups and local businesses', facilitated by Bradford Environmental Action Trust (BEAT, 2016: online).

These research outputs were disseminated extensively and have direct connections to this apparent 'lost' language. Referencing Oliver Rackham's *Trees and Woodland in the British Countryside* (1976), Macfarlane (2015: p.9), quotes Rackham in defining, 'the four ways in which "landscape is lost": through loss of beauty, the loss of freedom, the loss of its wildlife and vegetation, and the loss of meaning'<sup>6</sup>. These ideas resonate with current environmental issues and debates, reflecting some British attitudes and cultural definitions projected on to the landscape. The landscape of northern England and human connection is directly affected by the forever-changing politics<sup>7</sup>, by land management, government and environmental policy. Rackham also suggests, however, that the arts can reflect some of this (lost) meaning back to us. Following MacFarlane and Rackham, my research has attempted to do some of this reflecting back through photography (see Case Studies 1,2 & 3).

### **2.3 Contemporary Conflict:**

Contemporary conflict in nature writing is highlighted in Mark Cocker's article, 'Why is the "new nature writing" so tame?' (Cocker, 2016: online), first published in *The New Statesman*. Cocker takes a provocative position, arguing that individuals with 'naturalist' knowledge should be writing about nature; he identifies nature as a single classification 'non-human' and detachable from 'landscape' as 'culture' is detachable from 'literature'. Cocker's argument appears straightforward, however this is a complex and polarized debate. Cocker writes:

---

<sup>5</sup> BEAT 'to date, the project has planted 465,000 native trees / shrubs at over 350 different sites across Bradford district. In addition to new planting, the project offers advice and practical assistance with existing woodland management and can help draw in grant aid for this work'. (BEAT, 20016: online)

<sup>6</sup> At Street Level Photoworks Gallery, Glasgow at the exhibition opening for *Re: Collections* during my artist talk about Rackham's 'four ways in which landscape is lost' (30.1.16)

<sup>7</sup> At the time of writing, North Yorkshire 'council's landmark ruling approving fracking in Kirby Misperton, near North York Moors'. (Halliday 2016: online).

The real danger is that nature writing becomes a literature of consolation that distracts us from the truth of our fallen countryside, or – just as bad – that it becomes a space for us to talk to ourselves about ourselves, with nature relegated to the background as an attractive green wash. The project of re-enchantment might restore to us a canon of lost writings about the eeriness and mystery of our landscape. Yet, as Emerson warned in his essay “Nature”, what worth is there in words that have no real soil at their roots?

(Cocker, 2016: online)

In this, Cocker positions relevant questions based around cultural interests that have associations with nature. He references nature writer Richard Mabey in his argument:

Mabey’s entire project could be summarised as a movement along a single axis between culture – land practice or literature, science, the visual arts, sculpture, whatever – and nature. It is metaphorically and actually rooted in a soil of real, living things. Almost every one of the books involves movement between those two poles. In Macfarlane’s work and in so many of the new books, nature and culture have been replaced by landscape and literature. It may seem a relatively small shift in emphasis but one cannot help pondering its significance.

(Cocker, 2016: online)

Although I recognise this argument, my position is closer to MacFarlane’s. In my practice-led research, no landscape is free from personal projections, political consequence and cultural filters. A combination of ‘naturalist’ knowledge and ‘new nature writers’ and my own direct experience in the landscape, have informed my research (RA 5).

Also important to my thinking is the work of Roger Deakin. In *Wild Wood, A Journey Through the Trees* (2008) he linked British attitudes and cultural definitions projected on to the landscape with the ever-changing politics concerning the land. He talks about the woodland providing a crossing from one territory into another. ‘It is where you travel to find yourself, often, paradoxically, by getting lost’ (Deakin, 2008: p. x). He associated the woodland as a place of discovery through repositioning yourself and his ideas aligned with my transformational photographic strategies (see Case Studies 1 & 2) in re-visioning a place.

## 2.4 Unofficial to Official:

In Richard Mabey's book first published in 1973, *The Unofficial Countryside*, he repositioned overlooked green spaces and neglected brown field industrial sites and gave them meaning and a new 'nature' status; due to various flora and fauna they supported. His writings aimed to draw attention to a non-idealised naturalised landscape and place it into the public consciousness. Mabey's ideas, as seen are still relevant within current nature debates and discourses. Mabey describes:

Our attitude towards nature is a strangely contradictory blend of romanticism and gloom. We imagine it to 'belong' in those watercolour landscapes where most of us would also like to live. If we are looking for wildlife we turn automatically towards the official countryside, towards the great set-pieces of forest and moor. If the truth is told, the needs of the natural world are more prosaic than this.

(Mabey, 2010 (1973), p.19)

In fulfilling my research aim (5), to examine how contemporary nature writing can inform and contextualise photographic visualisations of the northern landscape, Mabey's work was also an important inspiration: for example, *Sharpe's Wood* is on the edge of a city, passed by thousands of commuters daily. The research repositioned this overlooked landscape into a wider cultural context and Mabey positions similar 'in-between' landscapes within our consciousness and imagination.

## 2.5 Historical Nature Writing:

Richard Mabey led me to Gilbert White's *The Natural History of Selborne* (1924) first printed in 1789. White's detailed writing and close observation mapped his local environment. White's detailed parochial personal studies have a historical and relevant contemporary context, as he references the wildlife, weather, and terrain, capturing the political and social attitudes of the time towards nature. The Guardian reports:

Rare harvest mice have been rediscovered in the village where the

species was first identified, after work by farmers and volunteers to help wildlife. More than 150 nests of the tiny mammal ... have been found around the village of Selborne, Hampshire, where it has been thought to be locally extinct for more than 25 years. Its return to the village, birthplace of famous naturalist Gilbert White who first distinguished the harvest mouse, *Micromys minutus*, as a species in 1767...

(The Guardian, 2016: online)

Gilbert White is seen as an Enlightenment figure capturing forty years of sustained observation of the natural history of his parish and beyond. *The Natural History of Selborne* is anecdotal in part and established a way of recording nature through individual personal experience and prolonged observation. In a time where travel broadened the mind, he looked primarily to his locality. This idea of local and sustained observation chimed with the research (see case studies 1 & 3).

## **2.6 Cultures of Night-Light:**

The photographic writer and academic Liz Wells states that 'light is not just a means of making ... light acts in terms of a discursive discourse', in her paper on *Nordic Light, Land and Landscape*, presented at *Northern Light: Landscape Photography and Evocations of the North*, Sheffield Hallam University 4-5 July 2016. As will be seen, such photographic 'discursive discourse' of northern night-light is investigated in Case Studies 1 and 2. Theoretically, it can also be linked with the night culture studied by Paul Bogard in *The End of the Night* (2013), where he explores the significance of darkness and the impact of artificial light on our individual and collective experiences. Similarly, in *Nocturne* (2011) James Attlee describes the cultural affects of moonlight on the mind and landscape. He describes how 'A moonlit night will provide plenty of illumination for the nocturnal wanderer, although he or she may find the world altered in unexpected ways (Attlee. 2012, p. 68). As will be seen, in Case Studies 1 & 2 my nocturnal navigations led to photographic investigations that encompassed such social, political and phenomenological perspectives, as well as aesthetic judgements (RA 1,2/RO 1,3).

## 2.7 Aesthetics: The Sublime, the Beautiful and the Uncanny:

The research explores the psychological, emotional and aesthetic aspects of the photographic landscape and its natural history, exploring the aesthetic paradoxes of photographic seeing and photographic language, which are central to the research (see Case Studies 1-3). In doing so, it also draws on and is informed by wider aspects of landscape aesthetics and debate. *Sharpe's Wood* and *Chasing the Gloaming* photographically engage and tap into our deep psychological sensibilities concerning the Sublime and the Beautiful, with non-conventional visualisations of local and regional landscapes of northern England. *Re: Collections* further extends this aesthetic exploration to aspects of the Uncanny.

In fulfilling research objectives (1,2 & 5) Edmund Burke's classic and much referenced text, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) suggested how the physical landscape affects the mind. For Burke, '... the idea of the sublime is an idea belonging to self-preservation' (Burke: 1990, p.79). The binary opposite of the sublime is beauty. Burke situates this in landscapes '... which excite in us the passion of love, or some correspondent affection' (Burke: 1990, p.102). Burke's dualistic ideas and philosophical speculation informed my background research, in that he placed the beautiful in an unthreatening context and the sublime in the obscure, giving way to feelings that elevated or disturbed the mind. Burke believed that both beauty and the awe of the sublime were processed on an emotional level. This research aims to test out such ideas photographically (RA 3).

In *The Fight for Beauty* (2016), Fiona Reynolds references Burke but moves out of aesthetics to make a convincing argument for beauty as a political tool, as progressive and not passive. Focusing on our connections to beauty via the cultural<sup>8</sup> landscape of Britain, her ideas attempt to re-position the *value* of beauty within a contemporary context with particular reference to

---

<sup>8</sup> Case study 1, 2 & 3 are geographically connected to protected landscapes throughout the north of England through tree preservation orders, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and National Park designation.

environmental and conservation issues. My photographic work and this critical commentary similarly argue the case for beauty as a critical and engaging tool (see Case Studies 1,2 & 3).

In contrast to contested debates about the value of beauty (as critically engaged aesthetic strategy), the sublime since Burke has retained a cultural credibility and a lasting resonance, as seen for instance in a recent conference at The Tate, *The Sublime Object: Nature, Art and Language* (2007 - 2012).

In discussing the 'the architecture (internal and external) of the sublime', De Bolla argues in, *The Sublime, In Our Time*, on BBC Radio (2004), that the sublime is a 'qualitative judgement'. (De Bolla: 2007) His architectural hypothesis can link directly with the experiential aspects of the sublime explored in this research (see Case Studies 1 & 2) For some reviewers of my work, for instance, the sublime is acknowledged as 'a twilight zone of psyche and memory' (McNeill, 2014) and an 'irrational space ... of our memory and imagination' (Stevenson, 2002).

In his essay on *The Uncanny* first published in 1919, Freud investigated:

... the semantic content that has accrued to the German word *unheimlich* (of which the nearest semantic equivalents in English are 'uncanny' and 'eerie', but etymologically corresponds to 'unhomely') ... persons and things, sense of impressions, experiences and situations, that evoke in us a sense of the uncanny ...

(Freud, 2003(1919) p. 124)

As will be seen, (see Case Studies 1, 2 and 3) peer reviewers have also identified aspects of the uncanny in my photographs, insofar as the work unsettles or transforms photographic seeing and representation. The formal representative and transformative abstract qualities of photography are combined through camera and non-camera experimental strategies, to re-position the ordinary or familiar subject matter out of its everyday or original context. The research peer review positioned the uncanny, by associated words, for example, 'haunting' (Prodger, 2012) (Case Study 2) and 'eerie, magical and ghost-like', (Case Study

3). The concept of the uncanny works on the premise of the 'concealed kept from sight' (Royle, 2003. p. 108); however, as will be seen, photography has the capacity to alter or enhance the uncanny aspects within its subject-matter, through specific transformative photographic affects.

## **2.8 Photographers:**

Many photographers' work and approaches to the British landscape and natural history have run in parallel to my photographic research. I have drawn from a tremendously rich photographic field in terms of my influences from photographers past and present, named and anonymous. The significance of historical photographic research precedence is considered at length in the case studies chapters. Here, I briefly review the key contemporary photographers work, which informs or acts as a parallel to my work. There are too many to name and include in this commentary.

Here I review in particular, three photographers based and working in the South West of England, Jem Southam, Garry Fabian Miller and Susan Derges resonate with the wider research aims (1,5), in their development of specific vernacular visual languages, which aesthetically transform and extend the value of the ordinary landscape and position it within a wider cultural context.

Jem Southam's large-format colour series *The Painter's Pool* (2003) chimes with *Sharpe's Wood* as both bodies of work are made at a significant place on the edge of our own home city, within landscapes etched with memory and imbued with a very personal narrative. Our reflective and repetitive analogue photographic methodologies also align through sustained observation and under specific light conditions. Our photographic series position the English local landscape within a broader cultural discourse and engage photographically with the value of the ordinary landscape through traditional analogue photographic strategies.

The Victoria & Albert Museum exhibition *Shadow Catchers* (2012) showcased a selection of experimental contemporary camera-less photographic practitioners.

The selected artists explore the historic contact print process with Miller selecting analogue based strategies and Derges utilising analogue and digital methodologies to visualise hidden elements of their surrounding landscape. Their experimental non-camera contact photographic processes approaches have associations with the practice-led research of *Chasing the Gloaming* and *Re: Collections*. By positioning the subject matter in direct contact with a photographic receptive surface and exposing it to light (natural and artificial), these camera-less strategies reveal and visualise the previously unobserved or hidden aspects of the landscape. These contemporary camera-less strategies update photographic contact print methodology and utilise light as a means of photographic description, visualisation and meaning.

The photographic-artist Ori Gersht explores the landscape through the still and moving image with work, which is under-scored with a poignant political past in *The Clearing* and *The Forest* (2005). His highly conceptual and sensitive approach is informed by a deep-rooted personal connection to particular places and it is this intuitive selectiveness that resonates with *Sharpe's Wood* (see Case Study 1). Furthermore, Gersht's 'explosive' experimental still life studio based work *Time After Time* (2007) draws aesthetic inspiration from Henri Fantin-Latour a nineteenth century painter. Gersht's flower re-arrangements are photographed mid-explosion and are literally captured suspended between something very deeply beautiful and disturbing. His still life work has strong painterly aesthetic associations with the beautiful and also photographically with the uncanny, which resonates with *Re: Collections* (see Case Study 3).

Hiroshi Sugimoto's black and white approach and photographic strategies encompass and explore photographic truth and illusion in his work *Dioramas* (1974-2012) where he photographed in situ a museum natural history collections. Furthermore, Sugimoto's photographic non-camera studio-based experiments, *Lighting Fields* (2009) photographically visualise electrical discharge and reveal this previously obscured characteristic of light itself, as a photographic visualisation of energy. The simplicity and repetitive nature in his



investigational working methodologies, based in situ or the studio, align with Case Study 3 and the core research aims and objectives (RA 1/RO 1,2,3).

The early nineteenth-century English Romantic painter J. M. W. Turner was an important and early research reference for me, particularly his personal exploration of the British landscape and the sublime, through his atmospheric light and selective colour descriptions. Turner's aesthetic 'atmospheres' in his later oil paintings and his exploration of a painterly language that lay beyond the immediacy of vision, chimed in particular with my research practice for *Sharpe's Wood*. This initial inspiration from Romantic painting traditions remained a feature of my research practice and was subsequently extended to include specific research into and inspiration from artists associated with the Pre-Raphaelite movement, with their highly detailed nature studies and their use of a saturated colour palette. As will be seen, curatorial review positioned and validated these links between my practice and specific painterly traditions.

The contemporary context of my practice has been identified by a number of writers. In his essay *Photography in the North of England* for Look/15/ Liverpool International Photography Festival, Paul Herman (Director of Redeye) reflects on the north being a 'productive place to work' with a rich vein of photographers. He lists, 'Liza Dracup, Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen, Tessa Bunney, Kate Mellor and John Kippin', who are 'all driven by their surroundings' across Yorkshire and the North East. The work of Konttinen documents the changing social and cultural value of an urban northern landscape; this contrasts with Bunney's documentary exploration of the more rural aspects of human connectivity and interaction within the 'natural' northern landscape. Another contrasting approach is the experimental photographic approach of Mellor known for her use of various cameras, for example, a large format pinhole camera and the panoramic Widelux. In Mellor's Bradford Grid work (we are both original members of this photographic collective), she explores topographical aspects of the City of Bradford in relation to 'architecture, vision, imagination and desire' (Mellor 2017). Finally, Kippin's critical lens focuses on the impact of social, political and

environmental change on the post-industrial northern landscape. He references a painterly picturesque aesthetic in *Nostalgia for the future* (1988), for instance, prompting questions around our association with particular northern landscapes in relation to our collective and personal projected memories. Herman's list collectively links photographers whose practice visualises and extends ideas of the north and reaches beyond its own geographical boundaries to extend to British and international audiences.

As Herman's essay suggests, my work can be contextualised alongside a number of photographic artists who in different ways and through different photographic methodologies explore aspect of the northern landscape. Further contexts for my practice include international photographers who explore their own landscape subjectivities. Helen Sear, for instance, is acknowledged widely for her work, which navigates landscapes familiar to her and explores the sensory layers of perception, touch and memory through her surroundings, human and animal references. Her photographic experimental research crosses overs from the real landscape to institutional museum's constructs (of the outside inside through taxidermy and diorama display). Her works *Still – a landscape in ten parts* (2002) and *Spot* (2004) align in particular with *Re: Collections* (2013), drawing our attention sideways and shifting the visual tensions of the institutional representation so as to make new cultural contemporary connections.

The British artist Mat Collishaw is associated with the 'shock-art' of the Young British Artist (YBA) collective in the Nineties. His edgy two and three-dimensional multi-disciplinary work still receives wide recognition. His ideas, methodologies and approaches are eclectic and his references are diverse. He plays with and deconstructs references to historical painterly and photographic Victorian aesthetic, particularly in his works *UV Garden* (2008) where he made a direct photographic reference to *The Cottingley Fairies*. His often beautiful works is at times visceral and can make uncomfortable viewing: parallels can be drawn between his approach to exploring and my own collections-based research with *Chasing the Gloaming* and *Re: Collections*. Collisaw's photographic work *Insecticide* (2006) for example, focuses on disintegrated and fragmented

Lepidoptera, he isolates and creates tension on a black background. There is a beauty in their demise as he captures a tension within the visual delicacy articulated through photography. As will be seen my research took me into similar territories of interpreting Victorian artistic and photographic aesthetic in a contemporary context.

Numerous other historical and contemporary photographers' with their specific individual conceptual approaches and working methodologies have worked in parallel with my own practice and have informed the research trajectory with their visual explorations around the photographic visualisation of landscape and natural history, its use of visual language and theory, its wider cultural interpretation.

### 3. Case Study 1. *Sharpe's Wood*.

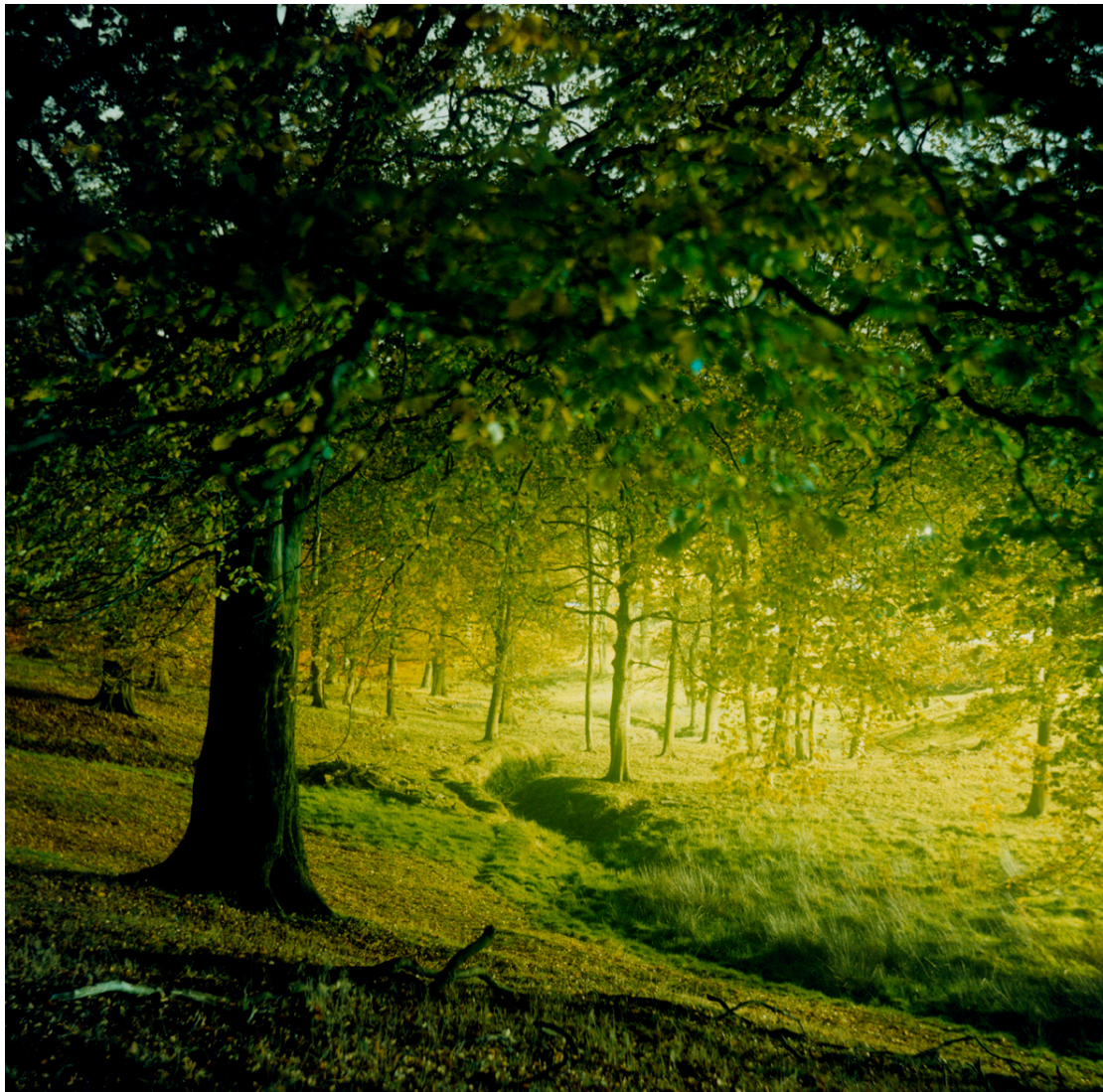


Fig.2. Final edit. *Untitled. Sharpe's Wood* (2007)

#### 3.1 Introduction:

In *Gossip from the Woods* (2013) Sara Maitland explores northern Europe cross-cultural threads within the context of the woodland, myth and story telling. She describes the forests of northern Europe in couplets of contradictory terms, as 'dangerous and generous, domestic and wild, beautiful and terrible' (Maitland 2013: 6). Such paradoxical couplets also inform the research described in my first case study, *Sharpe's Wood*, in which I explored the transformational

potential and aesthetic paradoxes of photographic *seeing* in a northern local woodland by photographing at night (RA 1,2).

*Sharpe's Wood* is the result of a substantial body of photographic research set in a woodland situated on the periphery of Bradford, edged by pastoral land, residential properties, a production plant and fringed in part by highways. It is on the edge of both the urban and the rural, an in-between place shaped by two contrasting terrains. *Sharpe's Wood* cannot be found by name on any Ordnance Survey (OS) map. The name *Sharpe's Wood* is a colloquial name for the Stoney Ridge Plantation situated to the northwest of Bradford. The keep out signs and a longstanding boundary millstone grit<sup>9</sup> wall enclose the site, reinforcing its status as private and off limits. To the uninformed eye the wood is a 'natural' environment, a place of the wild, with no intervention from the human hand.

The Hall family own the worldwide brand Hallmark Cards PLC and the Stoney Ridge Plantation next to their production plant. W.N. Sharpe<sup>10</sup> owned the company and adjacent woodland before the Hall's. The name *Sharpe's Wood* originates from the Sharpe's family ownership. Hallmark have an arrangement with the Forest of Bradford to manage the site up until 2020, both investing in the biodiversity of the woodland, through planting initiatives and educational/vocational projects.

The Stoney Ridge Plantation is a mile away as the crow flies from the site of the world famous Cottingley Fairy photographs<sup>11</sup>. The historical OS maps kept at Bradford Central Library indicates the plantation was established in the middle of the nineteenth century and once extended beyond its original boundary to the site of my family home, built in 1962.

---

<sup>9</sup> Millstone Grit stone is particularly identifiable with West Yorkshire and the north of England.

<sup>10</sup> In 1984 Hallmark Cards PLC purchased W. N. Sharpe's greeting card company, which was established in the 1930's. The building was commandeered in the Second World War for the assemblage of communication equipment.

<sup>11</sup> The Cottingley Fairy photographs (1917) were imagined and fabricated by cousins Elsie Wright and Frances Griffiths, in Cottingley, England. Elsie Wright admitted the fairies were paper cutouts in the 1980's. The National Media Museum in Bradford has the original cameras in its collection.

### 3.2 Initial Testing Ground:

Various landscape sites on the edge of the Bradford Metropolitan District were testing sites for early photographic night strategies preceding *Sharpe's Wood*. This initial multi-site investigation gained the commission *Unseen* (2003), as part of the exhibition *One Landscape Many Views*<sup>12</sup> (Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, BMG). The initial research for *Unseen* started around the periphery of the Stoney Ridge Plantation on Stoney Ridge Road and concluded in the wood.



Fig.3. *Illuminate Light Night Festival. Sharpe's Wood, Centenary Square, Bradford (2006)*

Anne McNeill viewed *Unseen* at Cartwright Hall and subsequently commissioned *Light Night*<sup>13</sup> funded by the Arts Council England. Impressions Gallery moved from York to a purpose built gallery in Bradford city centre. As part of the *Illuminate Light Night Festival* (2006) five selected photographs in light boxes re-named as *Sharpe's Wood* were exhibited on the outside wall of Impressions

---

<sup>12</sup> *One Landscape Many Views* commissioned by The Culture Company, Leeds (2003)

<sup>13</sup> *Light Night* a working title for *Sharpe's Wood* on the Arts Council Funding application.



Gallery. This preceded the full inaugural show of *Sharpe's Wood* (2007) at Impressions Gallery, Bradford (RA 6).

### **3.3 Research Outputs:**

The final research outcomes included a touring exhibition (gallery and non-gallery context) 2006 - to date, artists' film (gallery & world wide web), artist talks (academic institutions, & galleries), selected works group exhibitions (photographic & non-photographic), press coverage national and regional (specialist and non-specialist), Hereford Photographic Festival Twentieth Anniversary (2011), extensive peer and public review, research paper for *Northern Light: Landscape Photography and Evocations of the North*, Sheffield Hallam University (2016) and conference exhibition. Selected work is archived with Impressions Gallery and in private collections (Reference 7-7.9 & 10-10.16 'Research Evidence').

### **3.4 Experimentation with Constraints:**

Early experimentation for *Sharpe's Wood*, for instance, started in early 2000. This led to an on going fascination with this particular ordinary and local place and raised questions on how it could be photographed. This experimental stage led to the development of photographic strategies that revealed visual paradoxes, which in turn raised new possibilities in expressing a direct aesthetic experience by photographing at night and how nightlight can be employed as a filter for contrasting meanings. These strategies further raised questions around the photographic representation of the *real*<sup>14</sup> landscape and how the camera transfigures nightlight beyond the representational. In this research phase, it became clear that the questions raised, also extended outside the boundary wall of the wood, as the photographs engaged with the wider cultural, social and historical debates about the natural landscape of northern England.

---

<sup>14</sup> *Real* landscape the tension between the actual landscape photographed and its representation in a photograph.

Throughout the production phase of *Sharpe's Wood*, I first experimented by making work with one camera close to the edge of this wood, using the ambient light (natural and artificial) and extended exposures and using the perimeter wall as tripod. I later expanded and tested this methodology by photographing with two cameras deeper into the woodland. In doing so, I was able to explore how the static eye of the camera, coupled with long exposures, could capture an 'in-between' light. The technical capabilities – and limitations - of the camera and film presented a world of contradictions and questions, leading to a depiction of opposites simultaneously: light and dark, day and night, 'truth' and 'illusion'. Extended exposure times led to the visualisation and preservation of a nightlight spectrum of colour as photography revealed the 'hidden' colours concealed from the eye (RA 1/RO 1,2).

Hallmark gave access to their private woodland, which led to further opportunities to test out the thresholds and limitations of my own vision and photographing at night. Throughout, I added the tripod as an experimental tool. This fundamentally impacted on my viewpoint in terms of selection, position and the ability to be closer or further away from principle light sources. It gave me the freedom and flexibility to make work, anywhere in the woodland.

In all of this, I worked alone in the woods occasionally accompanied by an assistant. Even when accompanied, the edginess and unease I felt and associate with the Sublime never subsided. The lack of light effected more than orientation but also decision-making and vision, which gave way to a sense of general disquiet (RA 3).

A pivotal moment in my initial research came from the chance purchase of a Kershaw<sup>15</sup> medium format camera *found* in a charity shop in Leicester. My previous approaches to landscape through 35mm experimental darkroom strategies became redundant and replaced with an in-camera single exposure strategy with no post-production. This simpler strategy raised far more questions that related directly to photography, the photograph and the

---

<sup>15</sup> Kershaw 450 with 80mm lens (6cmx6cm) manufactured by Kershaw-Soho Ltd, Leeds (1950's).



landscape. As the pace of work at night was slow, the addition of a second camera also allowed for more testing on a single night (RA 1/RO 2,3).

The cameras were fully manual and with a fixed focal length 80mm lens. I had to move my body to get closer to the subject. I had to *work* the wood. The shutter speed was permanently set on b (bulb) for long exposures. The photographic strategies of the extended exposure challenged modern instantaneous photographic associations by extending the photographic *moment* to minutes.

There was no way to review on site the photographs, as the latent image required development. In many ways I worked *blind* at night as the lack of light obscured my field of vision (direct and in-directly through the viewfinder). The lack of accuracy of the in-built viewfinder coupled with the imperial on-camera measurements led to framing and measurement 'guesstimation'. The actual accuracy of the 'guesstimation' would only be revealed after film development; experience over time led to more accurate measurements. However, the photographic outcomes were always open to the element of chance and never became a prescriptive visualisation, as the analogue night strategies always had the element of surprise at the film processing and development stages (RO 1,3).

Working with inexpensive equipment also meant there was no need to be too careful about placing the cameras on the damp woodland floor or on a moist mossy wall. The weather also affected the conditions on site and again the cameras never became a barrier to research. In other words, the second-hand camera enabled a wide-ranging experimental approach.

The contact sheets were a significant part of my reflective research and informed subsequent visits to the wood. The sheets sequentially visualised the element of chance and 'guesstimation' strategies, by visualising the *hidden* aspects of the night, such as unseen forms and the nuances of light and colour. The contact sheet presented hard evidence of paradoxical tensions between my direct experience and the photographic account. However, even though the research extended over many years the contact sheet never totally overcame or corrected

my night-blindness, as there were always subtle nuances in the nightlight that challenged my direct, human *incomplete* account of the landscape (RA1/ RO 3).

### 3.5 Photographic Visualisations:

The woodland positioned on the edge of the urban and rural is not entirely black at night as light leaks in from the fixed glow of streetlights<sup>16</sup>, industrial white lights of Hallmark, transient traffic and cyclical moonlight. This composite light evaded my direct vision, however, the effects of the multisource light on the woodland were photographically visualised. In particular experimentation with the extended single exposure revealed on film, a light sky, vivid colours and variants of the same colour, multi-layered light (intensity) and details in the shadows<sup>17</sup>: an *alternative* landscape previously unidentifiable. This purely photographic visualisation challenged many established views and as will be seen, prompted a reaction from the public and peers, on the manifestation of the transformative qualities of photographic medium and its relation to the subject matter (RA 1,6/RO 1).

For instance, at times the intrusive yellow sodium street lighting dominated by masking other lights' subtle colour shifts. The streetlight appeared particularly dense when near the perimeter wall. This vale of intrusive monochromatic light could be filtered, toned down and even balanced with other ambient light sources, through the film's inherent sensitivity to other light sources (wavelengths) and through selective compositional strategies.

---

<sup>16</sup> Bradford Council replaced sections of sodium street lighting around the periphery of *Sharpe's Wood* for magnesium (white) lights in 2014/2015. The localised particular light captured in *Sharpe's Wood* is gone due to changes directly influenced by the government's Artificial Light in the Environment Policies (DEFRA) 2013.

<sup>17</sup> Fox Talbot gave his technique of capturing images that exist beyond the visible eye 'sciagraph (the depiction of shadows)'. (Barnes, 2010)



Fig.4. Final edit. *Untitled. Sharpe's Wood* (2007)

However, the dominant yellow light could also be utilised as a deliberate photographic strategy, once revealed by the element of chance. This considered strategy, for instance, extenuated the autumn leaf colour in the wood. The nuances of light intensity, colour temperature and seasonal variations extended into winter, as a deciduous winter wood has no leaf cover to obstruct or diffuse the ambient light: this strategy led to the photographic visualisation of light spreading further and appearing layered.

Other differently positioned light sources cast multiple shadows and these contradictory double shadows were made visible by photography, as again they were virtually undetectable to the naked eye. In my research, the autumn and winter months were the most productive research time when more of our



waking hours are spent in darkness due to the tilt of the earth axis. The shifting seasonal colour palate and the changes to the flora in woodland influenced my strategies. The winter snow lightens areas of the night wood (see Fig.5 below)



Fig.5. Final edit. *Untitled. Sharpe's Wood* (2007)

and the dominant yellow sodium streetlight contrasted with the photographically visualised aquamarine sky, a colour totally invisible to the naked eye.

Photographic experimentation, in other words, revealed that the night had a *unique* colour spectrum, which the eye is *blind* to in *real* time, as seen in Fig.4. The composite colour components are a result of the varied colour temperatures



of each light source. These colours were also affected by moonlight, atmospheric fluctuations and seasonal shifts. These combined as photographic visualisations, can in some photographs deceive the viewer into thinking/believing that the photograph is depicting daylight or it has been manipulated in some way.



Fig.6. Final edit. *Untitled. Sharpe's Wood* (2007)

Photography has visualised a paradoxical light that appears to represent both day and night, as seen in Fig.6.

The research around the photographic visualisation of the unseen has important historical and theoretical precedents. Fox Talbot in *Pencil of Nature* (1844-1846) for instance, referred to how photography 'unconsciously recorded' (Talbot,

1969: plate XIII), visualising previously ‘unobserved’ detail and enabling us to *see* the world differently (photographically). Talbot’s pioneering optical ideas have contemporary connections with the research aims in visualising the invisible or ‘unobservable’ forms and colour. These aims also align with Benjamin’s modernist theory around the ‘optical unconscious’ (Benjamin, 1931, cited in Mirzoeff, 2009. p.117), where photography is employed to reveal what is previously ‘unobserved or unobservable’ (Benjamin, 1979, p.239); Benjamin references observations revealed through close-up and slow motion<sup>18</sup> photography, for instance. Benjamin’s theory on photographic *seeing* widened our understanding of the world, through optical transformations that *adjust* our direct vision.

The *Sharpe’s Wood* research embedded elements of Talbot’s and Benjamin’s photographic *seeing* through photographic time (extended exposure) to enable the unknown to be known and make the invisible visible. Photography’s intrinsic ‘optical unconscious’ is applied to transform the limited nightlight and to challenge modern photographic time associations (seconds).

The camera is a conduit to *seeing* in the dark and the photograph a document of this photographic *seeing*. An aspect of this *seeing* led to the visualisation of the *hidden* nightlight spectrum of colours, as for instance with a deep indigo colour appearing only in the shadows, between April and September, an affectation of reflected moonlight on broadleaf deciduous foliage. The research around *seeing* photographically extends into Case Study 2 where analogue strategies are further tested in darker, less light-polluted landscapes (RA 1,2).

---

<sup>18</sup> Eadweard Muybridge’s (1800’s) sequential photographs visualised previously unseen locomotion of man and beast, which had an impact scientifically and photographically.



Fig.7 Final edit. *Untitled. Sharpe's Wood* (2007)

### 3.6 Printed output:

The print phase formed an integral part of the reflective research, as each stage visualised and revealed previously unobserved detail and colours hidden within the night-lit landscape. Furthermore, detail concealed in a work print (10"x 12"), could be revealed by an increase in scale (1m x 1m), by a secondary optic of the darkroom enlarger. This post-production stage further tested Benjamin's 'optical unconscious', by revealing more detail through another layer of photographic process.





Fig.8. Final research outputs. *Sharpe's Wood*, Impressions Gallery (2007)

The work prints were hand-printed, firstly by myself then Dr Charlie Meecham (Outsiders' Photography). As will be seen our photographic partnership has continued to *Landmarks* (2016). Michael Dyers in London printed the thirty-four final exhibition prints (full frame), a metre square Di-Bonded (5mm) on Foamex. The research outputs were framed (unglazed) and had a collective thematic impact once installed within a gallery space. An edit of twenty-seven photographs first showed at Impressions Gallery. *Sharpe's Wood* then toured the UK and continued to tap into our personal and collective memory of the woodland and the night, by using experimental photographic strategies to visualise the landscape of northern England, as seen in the public review (Reference 7.7 & 10.5 'Research Evidence') (RA 4,6/ RO 4).

The exhibition prints had enough detail and quality to be viewed up close, mid range and at a distance; also some photographs had a three-dimensional quality, comparable to the *Trompe-l'œil* visual effect. *Sharpe's Wood* has no set beginning, middle or end as a visual narrative. The narrative is non-traditional in its reading



and can be read from the edges in or the centre outwards, right to left, contrasting to the Western left to right orientation. *Sharpe's Wood* final research outputs could be edited for the venue. The curatorial-decisions were not led by a fixed prescriptive order and the work could be adjusted to *fit* the exhibition space. Although I worked with Anne McNeill with the hang at Impressions Gallery, at other venues, logistics time and expense placed the hang decisions with others.

### 3.7 Peer review:

The Independent newspaper described *Sharpe's Wood* as 'capturing the magical and often eerie effects created by the changing moonlight and night-time rhythms on woodlands ...', words associated with the uncanny (Battersby, 2010: online). In the accompanying artist's film commissioned by Impressions Gallery and available on YouTube (Impressions, 2007: online), I also reference the wider aesthetic traditions of the beautiful and sublime within a wider cultural context of the wood. Anne McNeill discusses this at length in her essay *The One That Got Away* from the *Ideas Series*, Photoworks. She writes:

The camera understands more than us. The camera becomes our looking glass... what she calls "making the invisible visible"... our own memory is implicated in how we respond to ... Sharpe's Wood... the location of these woods is of secondary importance – these are any woods, anywhere. The photographs tap into the powerful psychological workings of age-old stories.

(McNeill, 2014: online)

McNeill concludes with:

Sharpe's Wood is 'the one that got away'. For me, it is more than a document of the appearance of woods. These photographs locate us firmly within a twilight zone of psyche and memory...

(McNeill, 2014: online)

Some of these same connections to my work were made even earlier by Nicola Stephenson, Director of The Culture Company (Leeds), in the exhibition catalogue for *One Landscape Many Views* (2002). Writing about *Unseen*, she notes:

*Unseen* engages us, both physically and photographically with the night. It is a double map – a map of the real and irrational space. A map that locates us firmly within the twilight zone of our memory and imagination....

(Stevenson, 2002: n.p.)

In her review of The Hereford Photography Festival 2010, Sue Steward comments on *Sharpe's Wood* (selected works):

Falling into a category of her own, Liza Dracup's magical woodland scenes, photographed between sunset and sunrise, are so richly colourful as to suggest intense digital post-production. In fact, she explains, they represent the current trend of maintaining old traditions ... to create the dreamworld effect.

(Steward, 2010: online)

The exhibited prints further tested and challenged audience ideas on the traditions of aesthetic categorisation and the transformative affects of analogue photography, as reflected in the audience feedback. (Reference 7.7 & 10.5 'Research Evidence') Together, the peer and public echo the broader research aims and objectives within the field of photography and aesthetics, when a seemingly ordinary northern landscape can be transformed to an extraordinary 'anywhere' (McNeill, 2014: online) in the mind of the viewer (RA 1,2,3,6).

### **3.8 Summary and Evaluation:**

My 'tacit knowledge'<sup>19</sup> of *Sharpe's Wood* is deeply rooted and embedded within my direct experiential knowledge and memory from childhood to researcher. This lifetime's latitude of meaning is fused and interwoven within my practice-led research. *Sharpe's Wood* is multi-layered with strata from the past and present, a place where memory and imagination, fact and fiction coalesce within a single photographic exposure. *Sharpe's Wood* appears to bridge the divide

---

<sup>19</sup> Artist and lecturer Mike Collier's references his 'tacit knowledge' in his PhD '*An evaluation of the link between abstraction, representation and language within the context of current theories of Environmental Aesthetics and Phenomenology*', the University of Sunderland 2011.



Fig.9. Final research outputs. *Sharpe's Wood*. The Bexley Wing. St. James Hospital, Leeds (April-June 2010)

between my personal and a wider collective experience of the woodland and the imagination. As such, the research makes photographic contributions to re-visualising and *seeing* the landscape of northern England differently.

The nightlight obscured direct vision, yet paradoxically with the exact same nightlight photography revealed the once *hidden*. The sustained and intimate research in a local northern landscape gained a national and international profile, with a nomination for the Prix Pictet (Earth) Photography Award (2009), and varied dissemination, through photographic and non-photographic contexts. *Sharpe's Wood* is still being exhibited; for instance, in 2016 it has been positioned within an arts research context (conference paper to coincide with the *Northern Light* exhibition, Sheffield Hallam University (5 -31 July 2016).

The research extensively tested analogue strategies, established transferable working methodologies and photographic theory. As will be seen, this led to an

on-going conversation between photographer, landscape and audience in Case Study 2 (RA 1,2,3,5,6/RO 1,3).



#### 4. Case Study 2: *Chasing the Gloaming*.



Fig.10. Final edit. *St. Ives (night) Yorkshire* (2010) *Chasing the Gloaming* (2011).

##### 4.1 Introduction:

The second case study, initially titled *The Northern Land*<sup>20</sup>(2010), was a commission from the Mercer Art Gallery, Harrogate to respond photographically to the lifetime's work of Victorian painter John Atkinson Grimshaw (1836 - 1893). Jane Sellers, Director of the Mercer made contact in late 2009, as she had associated the photographic aesthetic of *Sharpe's Wood's* with the night colour painterly traditions of Grimshaw. The commission led to a re-examination and reinterpretation of Grimshaw's historical practice, starting with his moonlit paintings. Further background research led to an exploration of the more formal qualities of his other lesser-known still life work, which led in turn to a different

---

<sup>20</sup> The exhibition *Chasing the Gloaming* in the development stage had a working title of *The Northern Land*, as documented in the Arts Council England funding award (2010). The title changed to reflect the pursuit of the nightlight referencing Grimshaw's painting *'In the Gloaming'* (1878), held in the Mercer Fine Art Collection.

research phase with the development of studio and museums' collections-based strategies (RA 1,3/RO 1,5,6).

Grimshaw was a 'self-taught' artist, from a modest background, famous for his 'beautiful, evocative paintings of moonlit suburban lanes, gas lit city streets and docksides', which 'have emerged as some of the most popular works of the Victorian age' (Sellars. 2011, p. xi). Alexander Robertson<sup>21</sup> a former Senior Curator and Keeper at Leeds City Art Gallery organised the first twentieth-century major exhibition of J. A. Grimshaw and thirty years later Sellars planned another after an extensive gallery refurbishment. Over sixty Grimshaw paintings were sourced from private and public collections across the United Kingdom. The paintings selected spanned his whole painting career and encompassed a broad range of subjects from landscapes, still life, moonlight, portraits and allegories.

In *The Northern Land* two photographic research strands can be identified. Firstly, the site-specific landscape photographic strategies tested in *Sharpe's Wood* were transferred and adapted to locations with Grimshaw associations in northern England, from the inner city of Leeds, to the rural edges of Bradford, the northern coastline and across Cumbria and Yorkshire (RA 1,3/RO 1).

The second research strand developed in response to Grimshaw's still-life paintings and encompassed collections-based research that in turn informed studio experimentation. As will be seen, in the controlled studio environment, the pixel replaced grain (film), and a re-purposed digital device (scanner) replaced the camera. The Mercer and the Arts Council England funded this unique and world first opportunity for a female contemporary artist-photographer to respond to the work of a male Victorian artist. No other artist has been commissioned before or at the time of writing to respond to the lifetime's work of Grimshaw (RA 1/RO 2,3,5,6).

---

<sup>21</sup> Alexander Robertson is the world expert on John Atkinson Grimshaw and the former keeper at Leeds Art Gallery.

The final research outcomes included a touring exhibition, publications, an app *Art in Yorkshire* (supported by The Tate), artists' film<sup>22</sup>, artist talks at academic institutions and galleries, selected works in other exhibitions, with wide-ranging peer and public review. Two works are held in the Mercer Gallery Fine Art Collection and two in BMG Fine Art collection (Reference 8.5 in the '*Research Evidence*').

The Mercer Art Gallery exhibited *Chasing the Gloaming* in the North Gallery, with John Atkinson Grimshaw *A Painter of Moonlight* in the main gallery (16 April - 4 September 2011), both exhibitions toured to the Guildhall, City of London (19 September 2011– 15 January 2012). Audience figures totalled over 50,000 and the accompanying exhibition publication *Atkinson Grimshaw: A Painter of Moonlight*, edited by Jane Sellars with contributions from other artists<sup>23</sup> and writers, with a run of 7,000 copies, sold nationally and internationally. This included a chapter titled '*A Photographer's Response to Atkinson Grimshaw's Paintings*' that provided a curatorial and artistic context for *Chasing the Gloaming* and is discussed more fully below. Subsequently, two still life works were selected for York Art Gallery's, '*Early Religious paintings, Dutch and Flemish Still Life and Georgian Painting and Old Masters*' (10 February 2012 – 31 January 2013), which had audience figures of 133,664.

In accord with my methodology, the background research into Grimshaw began in the archive at Leeds Art Gallery; this gave the commission a historical and personal context beyond the publicly accessible gallery space. In tandem with this archival research, I undertook a series of site visits to 'Grimshaw' locations<sup>24</sup> as well as gallery visits to experience the range of Grimshaw's output. In this way, I encountered his early 'Pre-Raphaelite' detailed still life works, which broadened my understanding of him as an artist. As will be seen, this painterly legacy in turn led me out of the landscape and into the studio: an unforeseen but

---

<sup>22</sup> The artist film *Atkinson Grimshaw A Painter of Moonlight* showed at the Mercer Art Gallery and reaches a global audience on YouTube.

<sup>23</sup> In the final chapter of the book Jane Sellars writes on '*Liza Dracup: Chasing the Gloaming. A photographer's Response to Atkinson Grimshaw's Paintings.*'

<sup>24</sup> The site visits made clear that Grimshaw made compositional interventions in some of his paintings by 'moving' buildings to suit his artistic painterly arrangements.

deliberate artistic repositioning of my practice-led research. The experimental *photographic* research for *The Northern Land* started with his later night painting, and as will be seen, concluded with his lesser-known early still life works.

#### **4.2 Historic Photographic Visions:**

As the above suggests, my task of photographically responding to Grimshaw's oeuvre was a fascinating one, informed by research conducted at various institutions into his own painterly responses to the uses of photography. As a number of art historians have noted, the photography of that period informed his practice in a number of ways. Grimshaw's practices align with photography's invention, development and early dissemination. Alexander Robertson the world expert on Atkinson Grimshaw, for instance, believes the '... use of photography spans his whole career' and, in particular, he drew on Victorian combination photographic printing. (Robertson. 1996, p. 111). In his essay on *The Mystery of the Self-taught Pre-Raphaelite*, Frank Milner also argues that Grimshaw's theatrical links extended to his use of photography in the studio, with magic lantern large-scale projections to instruct his paintings, 'as Grimshaw must have worked with larger images', (Milner, ed. Sellars. 2011, p. 33).

Through reconnaissance visits to his painting locations, it also became clear to me that photography had assisted his perception of place, and that he combined the *real* and imagined in his paintings. From this, collections-based research at Insight at the National Media Museum also led to investigations on pioneering photographers and early night photography. This research helped me form a photographic historical filter to look through different eyes (Victorian) and examine the relationship between Grimshaw's painterly practice and photography of his time. In looking back through the eyes of a contemporary photographer and researcher into Grimshaw's artistic alignment with photography, it became clear this significant scientific discovery with its artistic applications, had informed his painterly traditions. This archival and historical collections-based research is part of my methodology (RA 4/RO 3,5,6).



### 4.3 Past and Present Landscapes:

Building on this initial research phase, *The Northern Land* developed analogue photographic strategies established in *Sharpe's Wood* to explore Grimshaw's Victorian interpretations across northern England<sup>25</sup>. This is phase one based on



Fig.11. Final edit. *River Wharfe (night)* (2010) *Chasing the Gloaming* (2011)

the landscape works of Grimshaw. While in some instances, I was able to photograph in Grimshaw's exact painting locations, in other cases the places I

---

<sup>25</sup> The Thames and the Docklands of London and Glasgow were not visited as part of the research due to time and financial restraints.

photographed had no direct Grimshaw *footprint*: they were associated instead by particular subject matter.

For example, his paintings of Wharfedale around the privately owned Bolton Abbey Estate had restricted public access (at night). I selected a site down river at Ilkley, a spa town, which had numerous night-light sources and resulted in a set of River Wharfe photographs for the final research output, fig.11. The river course *connected* to Grimshaw and in turn connects to our contemporary contexts. The river runs through a National Park and a Site of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI): these conservation designations position this landscape as a cultural asset<sup>26</sup> and worthy of legal protection. Separate from Grimshaw's picturesque descriptions of Wharfedale, the river also has a documented dark side in claiming lives, as its waters are deceptively inviting and deadly. In other words, the River Wharfe traces a geographical line of the beautiful and the sublime simultaneously and this dual aesthetic aspect of the landscape became integral to my approach in photographing specifically at night.

#### **4.4 Urban Work:**

Following more directly in Grimshaw's footprints, I photographed Leeds Bridge<sup>27</sup> over the River Aire. This landscape tested my previous semi-rural night-time photographic strategies and re-positioned them within an urban context: a challenge, as the urban is not my natural territory. In Grimshaw's painting of the river, he presented a daylight narrative of urban life in the mid eighteenth hundreds. I responded by photographing with an extended exposure from a different viewpoint and with a passing reference to human urban activity, as a streak of light from a bus. This demonstrates a continuing aspect of my research as people-less, which contrasts to Grimshaw's bustle of the city. The night-time sky translated to a half-light (twilight) depiction, revealing deep 'Pre- Raphaelite' colours previously concealed to the eye at night. This photograph of Grimshaw's

---

<sup>26</sup> In *The Fight for Beauty* Fiona Reynolds her ideas locate the beautiful as a criteria for cultural investment and long-term conservation.

<sup>27</sup> Leeds Bridge, Leeds is a site where the Louis La Prince made some of the first moving pictures in 1880.



Fig.12. Final edit. *Leeds Bridge* (2010). *Chasing the Gloaming* (2011)

home city of Leeds also references the Victorian architecture of his time with limited visual references or cues to date the photograph to a particular decade (RA 1,3/RO 1,5).

#### **4.5 Transformational Moonlight:**

In responding to Grimshaw's work, the differences in our visualisations are as important as any similarities. For instance, the harbour and seafront at Whitby, a location painted by Grimshaw, had become cluttered with ice cream parlours, amusement arcades, small pleasure boats and a brightly lit marina: gone were the industrious fleets of fishing vessels and (Grimshaw's) Victorian gaslight. The





Fig.13. Final edit *Moonlight, Whitby*. (2010) *Chasing the Gloaming* (2011)

historic lighting had been replaced with a myriad of encroaching electrical lights, too light polluting and harsh to balance with *his* moonlight. In response, I worked at other locations in Whitby, next to the cliffs and sea, with little or no artificial light. This led to the photographic transformation of the landscape I experienced directly and a contemporary reinterpretation of Grimshaw's historic work (RA 1,3/RO 1,3,6).

In her review of *Chasing the Gloaming* in *The Independent*, journalist Emma McFarnon writes about the aesthetic aspects of moonlight when captured photographically:

Liza Dracup captures the beauty of moonlight on film. As day turns into night the rolling countryside landscape transforms, taking on a magical and ghost-like presence under moonlight. The bewitching effects (are) captured on film ... Drawing inspiration from the light used in paintings by Grimshaw, Dracup's latest images form a photographer's response to one of the most successful painters of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

(McFarnon, 2016: online)

Yet, such review and interpretation is at odds with my *producer's* experience, as working in the moonlight is an immersive experience, as the light offers a different ocular perspective, as it feels equally limitless and limiting. For instance, Fig.13 *Moonlight, Whitby* (2010) is an abstraction of my direct<sup>28</sup> experience whilst photographing. I found myself in a stormy moonlit night where the tripod had to be physically restrained due to the strength of the wind, almost a sublime experience. The strategy of extended exposure and the effect of moonlight, however, led to an alternative representation: of light, space and atmosphere, a visualisation of apparently tranquil twilight scene. Photography appears, paradoxically, to unlock the oppressive night by its technical ability to accumulate light through measured time and reveal a once *hidden* landscape. My strategy of looking out across a moonlit sea again avoided any direct reference to human figures<sup>29</sup>, further distinguishing my photographic re-visioning of the northern landscape from Grimshaw's Victorian moon and gas lit paintings (RA 1,2,3,5/RO 2,3).

---

<sup>28</sup> In *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory* Marjorie Hope Nicolson wrote about two distant aspects to experiencing the sublime, firstly directly through nature and secondly in painting and poetry. (Nicolson. 1959, p.vii)

<sup>29</sup> However, at a later research stage another Grimshaw location on Scarborough seafront, I photographed distant backlit figures on the beach in daylight as a final research output.





Fig.14. Final edit. *Whitby* (moonlight 2010) *Chasing the Gloaming* (2011)

This reliance on moonlight made the actual landscapes darker than in *Sharpe's Wood* and such unfamiliar landscapes were also visually obscured by my lack of prior knowledge. In contrast to *Sharpe's Wood* with multiple visits over many years, these moonlit locations were visited only once, to coincide with the full moon phase. There were also stricter constraints on time, accentuated by the unpredictable weather and accessibility. Photographically, however, the actual landscapes are transformed on many levels: they differ visually from my direct phenomenological experience and from Grimshaw's painting in terms of light and the photographic aesthetics (RA 5/RO 2).

However, the moonlight photographs in both Whitby and Cumbria (Borrowdale and Langdale) are still visualisations of a given duration of time (minutes), and its effect on landscape, light, space (depth), colour and atmospheric conditions. The camera, unlike the eye, can absorb and accumulate light, in a way that the nocturnal is erased and the monochromatic nightlight is over-written by the broad colour sensitivity of the panchromatic film.

In *Sharpe's Wood*, the natural and artificial light led us into a seemingly contradictory world. However, in *Chasing the Gloaming*, the opposing elements relate to my direct experience and the photographic visualisation, as the discrepancies between the eye and film were elevated to another level (RA 1/RO 1,3,5).

As will be seen, through the collections-based research phase, I had explored the work of Fox Talbot and many Victorian pioneers who investigated the potential for photography to reveal the previously 'unseen' aspects of landscape and natural history, an idea of photography's 'optical unconscious' later positioned by Walter Benjamin in a modernist framework (Benjamin 1939, cited in Mirzoeff, 2009. p.117). This aspect of photographic discourse will be more fully discussed in the following chapter.

In this first research phase of *Chasing the Gloaming*, the natural night light explored Benjamin's theory on the 'unconscious optic', and tested how a '... different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye' (Benjamin 1970, pp. 238-239). As suggested in *Sharpe's Wood*, the 'optical unconscious', is more pronounced in the moonlight, as both optics (eye and camera) *stare* into the boundless night (a quality associated with the sublime), however, only one can process the unfolding of time coupled with the limited light.



Fig.15. *A Dead Linnet*. John Atkinson Grimshaw. (1862-1863) Leeds Art Gallery.

#### 4.6 Studio-based strategies:

Through my initial gallery based research I became aware of Grimshaw's still-life paintings that link stylistically with the Pre-Raphaelite movement, in particular through his intense use of colour and his 'naturalist' still-life assemblages of flora, dead birds and bird's nest. This aspect of his oeuvre contrasted with his famous nightlight paintings of the fast developing industrial northern economies and burgeoning international trading posts at ports across the UK.

In responding to this, the studio became my workplace in the later stages of my experimental research, through the amalgamation of historic magic lantern slides, bird specimens and non-camera (scanner) strategies. Interestingly the constraints of the studio altered my working methodologies and allowed me the freedom to make work at anytime and in any weather condition (RA 3/RO 2,3,5,6).



#### **4.7 Archive research:**

As already suggested, different collection-based research strands informed my practice-led research, namely the accessible original paintings of Grimshaw, the archival photographic material at Insight (NMM) and, as will be seen, a Natural Sciences Collections (BMG). The NMM collections are significant in terms of their national and international significance and context. I photographed and viewed hundreds of landscape and natural history photographs for reference, from early examples of daguerreotype, tintypes, albumen prints, magic lantern slides, combination prints, silver gelatine prints and photogravures; work made by anonymous and famous photographers alike.

The collection-based research provided me with evidence and actual original photographic parallels, within the parameters of Grimshaw's painterly productive years. Aware of the extent to which photography informed his painting, I researched the work of his photographic contemporaries including Victorian biologist and photographer Anna Atkins<sup>30</sup> and inventor, photographer William Henry Fox Talbot. As will be seen, these research visits began to re-activate the museum's collection by using historical photography to inform contemporary working methods (RA 4/RO 4,5). In particular, I was challenged to respond further to the experimental inventiveness of these photographic pioneers, in particular camera-less photography and combination printing.

#### **4.8 Developing Non-Camera Digital Strategies:**

From here, in the second phase of the research camera-less strategies became a key aspect of the research experimentation. The photographic scanner became the 'new' digital device. The scanner conventionally supports two-dimensional capture. I used the scanner to test out an alternative photographic approach, as a two and three-dimensional capturing device, by scanning magic lantern slides

---

<sup>30</sup> Anna Atkins one of the first pioneering photographers to produce a book of her photographs.

and preserved bird specimens. The initial inspiration came from *A Dead Linnet*<sup>31</sup> (1862-1863), a Grimshaw's memento mori painting which captures Victorian sensibilities around the dead and death, along with the ideas of the time around the domestication and observation of the wild through decorative (taxidermist) display.

A series of serendipitous ideas marked the beginnings of this research phase. I *found* in an antique chocolate box, filled with camphor-impregnated tissue paper to protect its contents, a pheasant cape: a flat preserved one-sided skin of the bird. The ensuing research for *The Pheasant*<sup>32</sup> led to the testing out of new studio-based strategies that focused on updating the Victorian principles of combination printing. In this early photographic process, said to have influenced Grimshaw, divisions of light (for example, the sea and the sky) are equalised in terms of exposure by combining two or more negatives to balance out the variable light sources, as seen at the NMM collections (for example, Henry Peach Robinson (albumen print) *Seascape at Night*, 1870). The earlier principles behind the combination print process seems to be driven by an attempt to manipulate photographic *seeing* and replicate human vision, as the eye has the capacity to balance opposing light sources, unlike the camera in a single exposure (RA 1,3,4/RO 2,5,6).

This historic process led to the development of experimental non-camera combination 'updating', through the layering of two or more material objects (photographic and non-photographic) through Photoshop. I scanned my small personal collection of Victorian landscape magic lantern slides and it seemed a natural progression to also scan the pheasant cape, with interesting visual results. The scanner's photographic *seeing* differed from the camera (film or digital). The slides were layered as a Victorian landscape abstraction with the pheasant image. *The Pheasant* established a new experimental investigational

---

<sup>31</sup> J.A. Grimshaw's painting *A Dead Linnet*<sup>31</sup> (1862-1863) is owned and on permanent display at Leeds Art Gallery.

<sup>32</sup> *The Pheasant* (2010) exhibited at the Manor House as an introduction to my work as part of the Ilkley Arts Trail prior to *Re: Collections* (February – March 2013).

strand and, as will be seen, this methodology had further significant artistic potential.



Fig.16. Final edit. *The Pheasant*. (2010) *Chasing the Gloaming* (2011)

I also tested out a new pre-visualisation strategy (through the imagination) that contrasted with previous night-time working-blind strategies. The scanner had compositional restrictions, as the object had to be placed face down on to the scanner bed prior to its digitisation. This obscured the underside view; therefore, the composition remained *hidden* until revealed on the Mac screen. The scanner non-camera strategy fed into my research around investigations into photographic *seeing*, leading to experimental strategies that aesthetically transformed the composite subject matter (RA 1,2/3).

Finding the pheasant cape in turn led to initial research with BMG's Natural Science Collections (Cliffe Castle Museum<sup>33</sup>), where Dr Gerard McGowan (Curator of Natural Sciences at BMG) introduced me to the study-skin:<sup>34</sup> a bird preserved and positioned on a wooden stick, an object of scientific study and observation, with no fabricated lifelike qualities. The specimens had tied legs, cotton wool in the eye apertures, a bound beak and wings positioned close to the abdomen. In accord with my research aims, I selected to use local bird species (study-skins) of the mistle thrush and the greenfinch (which resembled the linnet<sup>35</sup>). *The Greenfinch* and *Mistle Thrush*<sup>36</sup> were then assembled using the same magic lantern slides and digital combination photographic strategy as, *The Pheasant*.

The traditions of taxidermy had preserved the collections of dead birds and the study skin taxidermy arrangement has remained the same since Victorian times. To my eyes, the preserved avian form had a timeless quality and, as *A Dead Linnet* painting suggested, such specimens have the potential to be the object of an artistic idea and less of an object of scientific observation: a concept that was more fully explored in the next case study.

The scanner device visualised a 'different nature', not only different from the conscious eye, as originally suggested by Benjamin and others, but also different to the unconscious optics of the camera. The scanner *saw* the world 'differently'. The factory-set shallow depth of field accentuated the feather detail as the specimens made direct contact with the scanner glass; this strategy offered an alternative, camera-less contact print methodology (RA 1,2/RO 2,3,5). As a light-inscribing instrument, the scanner became a transformative instrument in many unexpected ways as it altered the specimens and brought about questions

---

<sup>33</sup> Cliffe Castle Museum (BMG) showed my first solo exhibition *The Enchanted Forest* (1995).

<sup>34</sup> The study-skins had to be quarantined if they left BMG premises so placing them directly into an actual landscape was not an option, as it would make them susceptible to pests, disease and damage, so I continued to use my limited collection of landscape themed magic lantern slides.

<sup>35</sup> The linnet a popular 'domesticated' caged bird in the late Victorian period.

<sup>36</sup> The Mistle thrush and Greenfinch part of BMG Fine Art Collection on permanent display at Cliffe Castle Museum and hung alongside landscape painter Paul Nash (1889–1946).

relating to the field of aesthetics, reflected in curatorial and peer review (see below).

In the final stages of the studio phase I experimented with other digital visualisation strategies. As already suggested, Grimshaw used various compositional strategies to suit his ideas. I combined my Grimshaw associated analogue and digital landscape photographs, of the moon, moonlight, trees within a colour Grimshaw plate, in Photoshop to further test and 'update' the combination print process, see fig.17.



Fig.17. Final edit. *Gold Circle (moonlight)* 2010. *Chasing the Gloaming* (2011)

#### 4.9 Printed Outputs:

The tactile quality visualised by the digitised scans led to tests with archival pigment prints produced by artist Simon Ford and a departure from the traditional C-Type print. This water-based (ink) process connected back to earlier print processes, where light-sensitive liquid is applied to a paper surface. The pigment print process had a multifaceted unique quality, in terms of rendition of colour and surface. It appeared more tactile than its C-type predecessor and more *real* in terms of representation of the subject matter, in particular the preserved birds.

*The Pheasant*, the first test print in this series, really focused my attention, as if seeing the image anew. At a larger scale<sup>37</sup> the photographic visualisation revealed detail obscured to the eye, even after being 'photographed' by the scanner. All of the historic prints I encountered during the collections-based research were small scale<sup>38</sup> (no bigger than A3) in comparison to the infinite contemporary print sizes. Reflecting on the size of the prints in the NMM collections highlights the restrictions of the earlier photographic pioneers. This could have been limiting in terms of historic photographic visualisation and *seeing*. The introduction of an alternative print process tested the principles of Talbot's photographic *seeing* and Benjamin's 'optical unconscious', as the print stage again extends photographic visualisation (RA 2).

#### 4.10 Peer review:

*Chasing the Gloaming* received a nomination for an international award, the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize (2012). The Mercer published three books containing *Chasing the Gloaming*. In *Atkinson Grimshaw: A Painter of Moonlight* (2011), Jane Sellars compares the *modus operandi* of Dracup and Grimshaw. She states:

---

<sup>37</sup> Printed on Somerset 75cm x cm 350 gsm decaled edged mould made paper.

<sup>38</sup> Photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto printed from Fox Talbots original negatives on large-scale silver gelatin prints (2009).



In fact, Dracup's work as a photographer has a far closer physical relationship with nature and the landscape than Grimshaw's as a painter. Ironically, whereas Dracup the photographer positions herself physically within the landscape, there is evidence to suggest, as Frank Milner has shown in this book, that Grimshaw was as dependent on photography as he was on nature to make his landscape paintings.

(Sellars, 2011: 155)



Fig.18. Final research outputs. *Chasing the Gloaming* (2011) Mercer Art Gallery, Harrogate

In the publication *A Woman's Work: Women Artists in the Harrogate Fine Art Collection* (2015), selected works from *Chasing the Gloaming* are in the same chapter on *Photography and Video* as photographic pioneer Julia Margaret Cameron, conceptual artist Tacita Dean and photographer Tessa Bunney. The book *Art and Yorkshire from Turner to Hockney* (2014), also features work from the project in the same chapter on *The Yorkshire Landscape* as painters J.M.W. Turner and J.A. Grimshaw and Bradford born, David Hockney. The photographic award nomination and publications position my research outputs within a wider photographic and broader artistic (historic and contemporary) cultural context.

Arts writer Michael Prodger<sup>39</sup> writes on *High 50 Culture* website, ‘Liza Dracup’s atmospheric photographs of birds and landscapes, meanwhile, teeter on the verge of haunting’. (Prodger, 2012) As will be seen below, Prodger has also peer reviewed and analysed my subsequent work and continues to offer perceptive insight.

I sent the academic and nature writer Robert Macfarlane photographs from *Sharpe’s Wood* and *Chasing the Gloaming*. He responded with an email communication, in which he said:

... Your work is beautiful, and the cusp it inhabits (and explores) between fairy-tale and actuality, and memory and vision all fascinate me – I won’t forget having seen your photographs.

(MacFarlane, private email: 24.10.11)

Macfarlane’s peer feedback around the aesthetics (beautiful) and photographic visualisation (memory and vision) are intrinsic to several research aims (RA 3).

Writing in the *The Spectator*, Andrew Lambirth has a less positive view of the work when exhibited at Guildhall. He wrote, ‘These were commissioned by the Mercer but did not manage to hold my attention, I’m sorry to say. Grimshaw is a hard act to follow’. (Lambirth, 2012: online). This view, however, was in the minority and contrasted with commissioner Jane Sellars and other peer review.

In an interview titled *Light in the Darkness – An Interview with Liza Dracup* from *Walk*, for University of Sunderland’s *Walking, Art, Landscape and Knowledge* research group, Walter Lewis poses questions around my photographic visualisations:

There is almost an extra step that your photography has got beyond ... It doesn’t see what you saw?

(Lewis: online 2013)

---

<sup>39</sup> Michael Prodger is the ‘*New Statesman*, Assistant Editor at and an art historian, Senior Research Fellow at the University of Buckingham, and a former literary editor’. (New Statesman, 2016)



Lewis has picked up on the research aim to explore how photography has enabled us to *see* the world differently and to test methodologies and strategies that extend photographic visual language. The question around the ‘extra step’ being a conscious act is an on-going investigation and conversation on photographic *seeing*, as will be seen in Case Study 3.

Having seen the work at The Mercer, Laura Turner, Curator of Art for York Art Gallery, requested *The Pheasant* and *Mistle Thrush* for a year long loan to be hung with Dutch and Flemish Still Life 17<sup>th</sup>-century still life paintings and in particular next to Snyder's Still Life with Dead Game (1614) at York Art Gallery (January 2011 to January 2012 the visitor numbers totalled 133,664. As will be seen, the still life photographic research outputs inspired by a Victorian painter led to further curatorial positioning with a broader and earlier European still life painting context <sup>40</sup> (RA4/RO5).

#### **4.11 Summary and Evaluation:**

*Chasing the Gloaming* connects contemporary photographic practice with historical traditions across photography and painting and re-positions two artists once separated by discipline, gender and their own histories. The initial curatorial commission acknowledged our reciprocal artistic connections of moonlight and its atmospheric effects on the northern landscape of England. The resulting research outputs were disseminated to photographic and non-photographic audiences with achieved unprecedented viewing figures and marked a growing national and an international profile, through association with a famous Victorian artist and through the research outputs (photographs) in their own right, with a peer nomination for the international Deutsche Börse Photography Prize (2012) (RA 1,2,3,4,5,6/RO 1,2,3,4,5,6).

---

<sup>40</sup> Leading to further collections-based research between Case Study 2 & 3 on European still life across UK galleries. My research interests focused on Dutch and Flemish 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century still life painting and in particular on how directional light emphasised and accentuate visual description, once positioned and painted on a black background. As will be seen, this influenced my non-camera photographic methodology in *Re: Collections* Case Study 3.



Fig.19. *Early Religious paintings, Dutch and Flemish Still Life and Georgian Painting and Old Masters'* (with Snyders painting in the foreground). York Art Gallery, York.

The practice-led research led to *new* institutional collections-based research methodologies that were interwoven with existing transferable methodologies of *Sharpe's Wood*. This significant research trajectory led to experimentation with new studio-based non-camera strategies and private and public collection based material. The northern landscape re-visualised through experimental (analogue and digital) strategies that engaged both audience and the maker.

In expanding previous visualisation strategies, which tested the optical separation between human vision and photographic vision at night, the newly adopted scanner strategies again relate in principle to Walter Benjamin's photographic theory. His *The Dialectics of Seeing* includes a review of the large-scale plant photographs of Karl Blossfeldt. Benjamin notices in Blossfeldt's pioneering close-ups, 'Here is a use of technology not to dominate nature but to take off the "veil" that our "laziness" has thrown over old nature, and allow us to see in plant existence "a totally unexpected treasure of analogies and forms", (Benjamin, 1928 cited in Buck-Morss, p. 158).

In my research practice, the use of 'technology' and its ability to reveal the 'optical unconscious' is two fold: first the capture (scanner) and then the visualisation through enlargement (archival pigment print), to reveal previously undetectable characteristics. This re-purposing of a scanning device extended the propositions of non-camera capture through the digital optimisation of photographic seeing.

The scope and the theoretical underpinning to these emerging digital strategies were fully realised in Case Study 3.

## 5. Case Study 3. *Re: Collections*:



Fig. 20. Final edit. Barn Owl. *Tyto alba*. *Re: Collections* (2013)

### 5.1 Starting Points:

The background for *Re: Collections* started in *Chasing the Gloaming* with limited access to BMG Natural Sciences Collections. Access was maintained, prompting further questions about the collections' future potential for investigation, re-interpretation and dissemination. BMG subsequently commissioned *Re: Collections* as an eight-month residency with full access to their extensive Natural Sciences Collections. The Arts Council England<sup>41</sup> was the main sponsor,

---

<sup>41</sup> The applications processes for sponsorship and funding for *Re: Collections* to BMG, the Arts Council, Bradford School of Art and NMM were made by Liza Dracup.



with contributions from BMG and Bradford School of Art in 2103. The National Media Museum (NMM) gave sponsorship in-kind with access to their world-renowned photographic archive Insight<sup>42</sup>. The national and regional institutional connections informed my initial research leading to questions relating to the *value* of their collections, beyond the archive (RA 1,5/RO 6.)



Fig.21. Initial research bagged specimens at 'the stores'.

*Re: Collections* differed from the previous two case studies, as they began in the landscape, at specific locations or in a very particular place. *Re: Collections* started behind the scenes at an indoor 'secret' location in Bradford. This building was known by the colloquial name 'the stores' by employees of BMG, a building that housed numerous specimens from across the globe, where time and material matter had been transformed, bagged, labelled and preserved by a taxidermist. Encoded within these collections is a timeline of our human connections with the wild in terms of what is selected for preservation, how it

---

<sup>42</sup> Insight (NMM) has 3.1 million photographs in its collection, at the time of writing a large part of the collections are moving to the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

was sourced. These collections and their dissemination can directly reflect on our historical and contemporary relationship with the landscape and its wildlife (RA 1,2,5/RO 1,3,6).

## 5.2 Context:

The Natural Sciences Collections (NSC) make connections to the past and can inform the present. The information they hold is recorded within a structured scientific system when accessioned into the collections. As will be seen, this information became an integral part of *Re: Collections*.

The collections are rooted with histories and embedded with cultural references that reflect past attitudes towards the natural world, science and the landscape. These evidential histories can inform contemporary connections between the human, the non-human and the landscape. This practice-led research prompted questions about how photography can open debates on the living landscape, in terms of conservation and ecology, as seen in the literature review (RA 5/RO 2,6). I write about this in the introductory text for the exhibition publication:

The photographs allow us to consider the preserved specimens and consider the paradox of their reworked 'natural' form. The work resides both in an artistic and scientific context and could bring about questions about our own personal relationship to the British Wildlife and its conservation.

(Dracup, 2013, n.p)

In the late nineteen fifties the Natural Sciences Collections at BMG were amalgamated with the Keighley Museums Collections. These acquisitions are variously sourced, from scientists in specific fields, from *well-travelled* Victorians, through to the keen amateur. 'The stores' became a place where British social structures appeared levelled and a local specimen had as much significance and relevance as a specimen from The British Empire or the aristocracy. These cross-cultural links, associations and varied contributors have built up a diverse cultural repository of social history (RO 6).

The NSC have been compiled in part through practices that now are seen as unethical, out-dated or illegal. For example, the sourcing of bird eggs or species (now endangered), were once legitimate but are now unacceptable practices. Other historical narrative threads are evident on the walls of 'the stores' hung with portraits of individuals who built the collections from botanists to ecologists.

*Re: Collections* aimed to reposition the contemporary context of the reserve<sup>43</sup> NSC. The collections are seen to have a contentious political context, as many regional museum collections are currently under threat from on-going government efficiency savings that have left collections without curators, mothballed and with no public access. The BMG are at the time of writing undergoing proposed staffing efficiencies as regional council budget provision falls from central government.

The final research outcomes included a touring exhibition (2013-2016), publications, artists' film (gallery & world wide web), artist talks (academic institutions, & galleries), selected works in group exhibitions (photographic & non-photographic), press coverage national and regional (specialist and non-specialist), peer and public review, research paper for *Visualising the Animal*, University of Cumbria (2015).

### **5.3 Studio and Non-Camera Strategies:**

*Re: Collections* is the original fixed title for this case study, with the prefix of re meaning 'regarding or with reference to' or in reference to memory and the past. This prefix seemed appropriate: as seen, the collections had already been identified, categorised and placed in a scientific reference system. The stores doubled up as a studio as the specimens could not leave without documentation.

---

<sup>43</sup> The reserve collection is not openly accessible to the public. The majority of the collections are housed in a climate controlled off-site location.

In the course of the research residency, the scanner replaced the digital camera initially used to document the mounted specimens. The scanner became a compact studio as it had its own built in light and A4 rectangle scanner bed to frame and place the subject. Its compact size made it ideal for working in a small corridor and a perfect device for use with a variety of study skins and mounted specimens. The scanner linked to an Apple Mackintosh Pro Mac with a portable hard-drive attached, as the files were large over one hundred megabytes each. No post-production was carried out at 'the stores' and the only retouching (Photoshop) took hours at my home-based studio, mainly to erase the scanned specimen detritus (borax used for preserving) from the photographs.

As a practitioner, the camera and the scanner have equal status: however, as seen in the previous case study, they *see* the world differently. Initial composition arrangement relied on 'shooting blind' and 'guesttimation' strategies as the scanner had no viewfinder and relied on on-screen assessments. The selected specimens were visualised by a digital 'contact-image' process, as they were in direct contact with the scanner's glass plate. This photographic 'contact-image' visualisation emphasised and articulated previously unseen detail that had evaded the eye and even the camera (digital), again extending Benjamin's 'optical unconscious' to non-camera photographic devices. The black ground recurrent motif in *Re: Collections* was inspired by historic European still life painting (as for instance those seen in York Art Gallery, see previous case study) and was achieved by the 3D study skin specimens not allowing the scanner lid to close and being left open (RA 1,2,3/RO 2,3,5,6).

The dehydrated state of the badger specimen, for instance, made it possible to fit (width-wise) on the A4 scanner while its full body length had to be scanned in two sections. The fox, hare and wildcat were also scanned using this double scan





Fig.22. Final edit. *Badger*. *Re: Collections* (2013)

strategy. The resulting scans were assembled edge to edge vertically (top and tail as one piece). On the whole, however, I employed a single scan strategy for consistency, allowing the fixed scale of the scanner to dictate specimen selection: as with previous case studies, I worked within the constraints of the optical equipment.

The red kite<sup>44</sup> (*Milvus milvus*) collected in 1906, is the earliest dated specimen in the final edit for *Re: Collections*. There is no location data with the specimen. It was collected as part of a pair (museum code CC.241-05). The newest dated specimen in the edit was the brown hare *Lepus capensis* found at Goose Eye,

---

<sup>44</sup> A successful red kite re-introduction program began in Scotland in 1996 due to a collapse in their UK numbers.

Laycock, Keighley on 17 Jan 2002. Older specimens from as far back as the 19<sup>th</sup> Century were photographed during the developmental stages of the research but they were edited out due to various factors including their deteriorated condition (see below).

In other words, in this research practice, the scanner can be seen as a transformative photographic device and, as with a camera, the photographer selects, edits and arrests to achieve the intended meaning and effect. These specific specimen selections allowed me to construct different visual tensions, from the study skins of the mammals, to the 'half-life' qualities of the *Barn owl* and the *Woodmouse*, to the 'semi-abstraction' of the *Green woodpecker* and *Stoat*. The transformative qualities of photography (scanner) had made these ordinary specimens extra-ordinary, extending my previous scanner-based research strategies from the composite works of *Chasing the Gloaming*, with the scanner as a multifaceted visualising device (RA 1,2).

#### **5.4 Mapping the Displaced:**

The taxidermy specimens once had a place in the ecology of a specific location. This permanent link to a location is recorded on a data label and attached to each specimen. In scientific or conservation research this data can be used singularly or collectively and can draw on further fields of study of biogeographic patterns, the decline or spread of native or invasive species and changes in land use and climate. The data provides information such as genus, Latin name, location and date where found, name of finder, cause of death, taxidermist and a museum identification number. All this evidence can situate the specimen back into a landscape, just as *Re: Collections* aimed to link to the real and imagined landscape through photography (RA 5/RO 6).

For instance, the badger specimen data label recorded, '*Meles meles* a road casualty, location Keighley Rd. Harden Bingley, 15 July 1981, Collector J. Scott'. During the initial research this data linking the animal to a specific rural location was of value in providing a context to the research. The recorded data had



Fig.23. Final edit. *Woodmouse. Re: Collections (2013)*.

potential for further narratives within an arts context and, as will be seen, acted as titles for the final exhibition prints (see 9.3 in '*Research Evidence*').

### **5.5 Selection of the (Extra) Ordinary:**

The initial research focused briefly on the eye-catching extra-ordinary exotic specimens from across the globe. For example, an original box full of unusual techni-coloured insects sent back to England from distant shores. The idea of working with the exotic was shorted lived, however. The two previous case studies had connections to British contemporary landscape discourses. These



Fig.24. Initial research. A box of exotica at 'the stores'.

established associations led to the main phase of research on the Zoology Collection (part of the Natural Sciences Collections) principally from the local area and the north.

For example, the decision to photograph the starling, alongside other familiar UK specimens also considered under threat, helped position *Re: Collections* within a current conservation framework. This aligns the 'local' and ordinary with national and global debates on the environment. This idea of 'the local' has important influence in the context of conservation debates, as seen in the literature review (RA 5).

Any specimens with an apparent visual reference to the sentimental<sup>45</sup> and/or the anthropomorphic were also edited out, for example, a tableau of a field mouse under a toadstool had anthropomorphic connotations, a minute remainder of

---

<sup>45</sup> The initial research phase with the Lepidoptera collections and the historical and contemporary cultural sentimental connotations of butterflies and moths led these specimens not being selected for the final edit for *Re: Collections*.





Fig.25. Final edit. *Stoat Re: Collections* (2013)

Walter Potter's<sup>46</sup> (1835-1918) tableaux's of Victorian whimsy. I had no deliberate intention of positioning *Re: Collections* within these now contentious cultural connotations.

### **5.6 Animated Stillness:**

The visual and contextual research outlined above, led to the decision to further explore the idea of 'animated stillness' to suggest a 'half-life' quality. I used the term 'animated stillness' in the interpretation text at The Manor House, my

---

<sup>46</sup> Walter Potter is referenced in *Re: Collections* paper presented at the *Visualising the Animal* Conference at Cumbria University, 2015.

paper at *Visualising the Animal* conference at Cumbria University (2015), in an interview for Radar (The Independent) and Street Level Photoworks, Glasgow (artist's film for the World Wide Web), specifically in reference to *The Stoat*, and *Greenfinch and Weasel* (Fig.26) photographs which appear to be caught as if alive, in the act of movement arrested by photography. The curled up underside of the stoat (specimen), not meant for the viewer, is revealed through photography, as if the animal is caught in a mid-fall: a paradoxical representation as if caught in a (fictional) fraction of a second. Photography inherently can freeze movement but, in this instance, it had frozen the already still, as if to suggest movement.

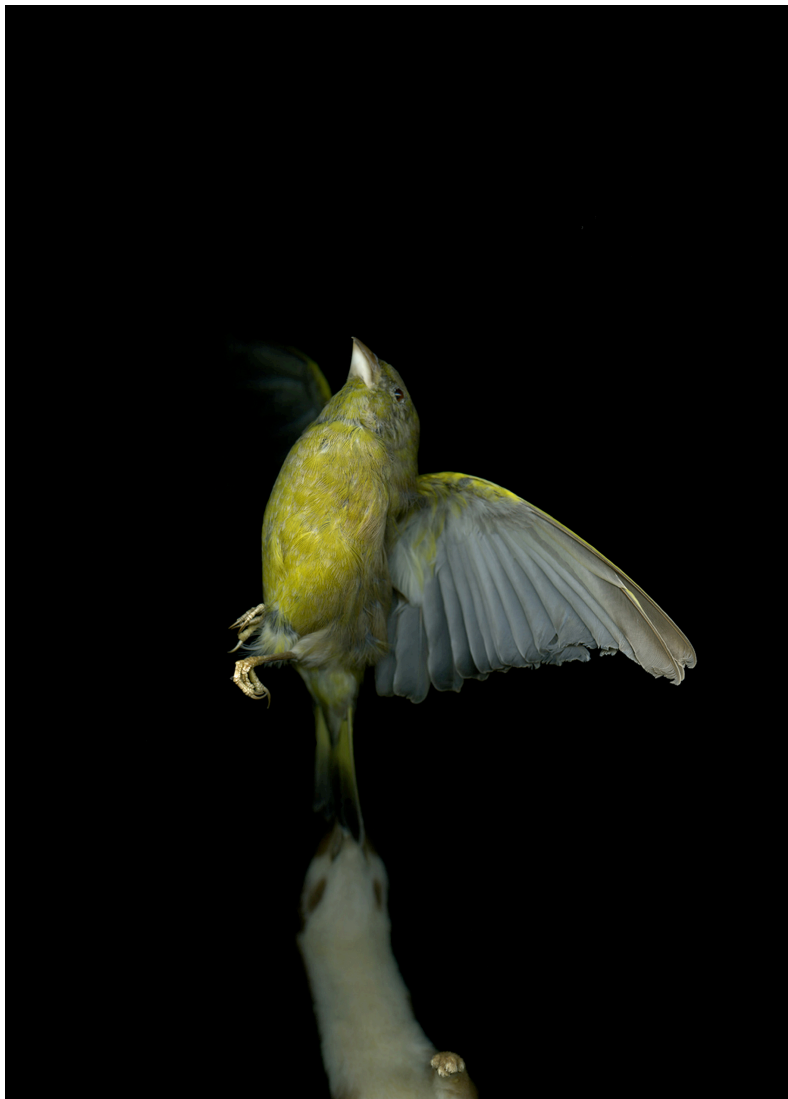


Fig.26. Final edit. *Greenfinch and Weasel*. Re: Collections 2013

In the *Greenfinch and Weasel* from the final edit, the underside of the greenfinch's wing is not usually visible to the naked eye in the wild due to the fleetingness of the subject: again, the photograph seemingly reveals the *unseen* of movement, imparting this transformative and half-life quality: animated stillness.

### 5.7 Transformations and Photographic Theory:

In his semiotic analysis of the 'connotative phenomena' in photography, Roland Barthes (Barthes, 1984: 90) implies that the connotations are already with the viewer when looking at a photograph. This observation can be related to the exhibition visitors' comments at the Manor House, for example, when one visitor wrote of the work being 'a reminder of our mortality and haunting'. Others articulated their connotative and personal responses to both the subject matter and its representation in the photograph (Reference 12.4 'Research Evidence').

Barthes analysed photography's limited ability to render or capture 'the real' (Barthes, 2000: 57) and suggested that: 'the photograph itself is in no way animated (I do not believe in "lifelike" photographs), but it animates me: ...' (Barthes, 2000: 20). This was tested in *Re: Collections*, for example, in the *Barn owl*. Realism, it can be presumed, was the original taxidermist's intention. Yet, through the addition of photography's ambiguity and openness, the descriptive 'specifics' of science acquire a different kind of 'accidental' realism, as described above as 'half-life' qualities or animated stillness. Put another way, photography's paradoxical effects lead to a new fluidity, an interaction of descriptive and deceptive qualities. These aspects create a tension between the artful science of photography, on the one hand, and the science of the Natural History Collections on the other. The specimens are 'fixed' by taxidermy and photography. Yet photography can also *unlock* and *unfix*. According to Barthes:

For the photograph's immobility is somehow the result of a perverse confusion between two concepts: the Real and the Live: by attesting that the object has been real, the photograph surreptitiously induces belief that it is alive, because of that delusion which makes us attribute to Reality an absolutely superior, somehow eternal value; but by shifting this reality to the past ("this-has-been"), the photograph suggests that it is already dead.  
(Barthes, 2000: 79)

In *Re: Collections*, the actual death of the bird or animal has occurred far away from the lens or the taxidermist's workshop. The taxidermist positions and mounts the specimens to look 'alive'. As seen, photography represents the taxidermist's representation and has the inherent ability to reanimate the once living specimen. In *Re: Collections* I was working with already static subject matter (taxidermy) and reflecting on how photography in itself can 'fasten down' its subject, but can also liberate it. In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes states:

When we define the Photograph as a motionless image, this does not mean only that the figures it represents do not move; it means that they do not *emerge*, do not *leave*: they are anesthetized and fastened down, like butterflies. (Barthes, 2000: 57)

With the layering of taxidermy and photography, there is potentially a double 'fastening down:' yet, as the previous discussion suggests, the paradoxical qualities inherent in photography appear also to unfasten the specimens, liberating their connotative potential instead. With this realisation, we can place the research firmly back into the 'language' of photography.

*Re: Collections* in principle set out to capture the 'qualities' of the collections. It became apparent that, once photographed, some of the mounted specimens had acquired a new half-life quality. This paradoxical thread ran through the work. The subject matter was already dead. The taxidermist failed to convince us that his specimens were anything other than 'stuffed'. But photography's deceptive visual language 'reawakened' these dead creatures. The photographs invert the seeming 'double death' described by Barthes. The use of the scanner and, as will be seen, the aesthetic quality of the archival pigment prints contributed to this apparent inversion of death and life.

The taxidermist's initial attempt to reconstruct nature contributes, in some measure, to this final deception. Photography had an inherent inability to capture the 'true' state of the subject matter. The taxidermist's intention for the material matter of the specimen to 'look alive' became a step closer with photography.



## 5.8 Visualising the (out of the) ordinary:

The photographic approach in *Re: Collections* repositioned the collection in a context that differed from the traditional museums dioramic exhibits. *Re: Collections* aimed to engage with current cultural and political debates around photography, natural history and landscape, through exhibition, the World Wide Web and the press. The reserve collection<sup>47</sup> became the subject matter. This 'hidden' collection through photographic practice 'revealed' its relevance to contemporary cultural discourses.

## 5.9 Outputs:

All the digital files were scaled-up from A4 to approximately A1 when printed. This fixed ratio increase of four times the original scan size, aimed to maintain their 'true' scale (specimens) in relation to each other. The printed outputs were outputted as archival pigment prints, on selected Somerset<sup>48</sup> paper stock. The fluid inkjet process coupled with the decaled edge hand-moulded paper visually transformed the digital files beyond the limitation of the Apple Mac backlit screen or a small A4 test print. The A1 print output became a photographic object in itself, again chiming with and extending Walter Benjamin's ideas around the 'optical unconscious'. Not only had the dual lens system of the photographic scanner visualised *lost* details, print had added another *seeing* layer.

For example, the materiality of the paper, the matt ink and the rendition of colour and a tactile quality (like the facture of painting) took the specimens another step away from their intuitional scientific context and re-positions the specimens as objects of photographic interpretation and observation. The complexities of photographic language (the print stage) have further altered and played with the specimen's representation outside a NSC context, whilst the

---

<sup>47</sup> The reserve collection is only accessible under curatorial supervision. Dr Gerard McGowan curator of Natural Science at BMG supervised access to the collections during *Re: Collections*.

<sup>48</sup> Somerset enhanced, 100% cotton, mould made paper, decaled edged, paper size 560mm x 255mm, 255g/m2 Radiant White. Acid free.

archive pigment print process has retained an aspect of realism. The tension of photographic realism underpins the photographic theory throughout the research (RA 4/RO 4).

### **5.10 Curatorial Interpretation and Exhibition:**

The Manor House in Ilkley<sup>49</sup> was the first exhibition venue for *Re: Collections* (17 Dec 2013 – 4 March 2014), an 18<sup>th</sup> century building, council-owned museum (archaeological) with a separate gallery space, placed in central location in the provincial tourist town. *Re: Collections* drew an eclectic audience and as will be seen, this is reflected in their feedback. The final edit of *Re: Collections* and a selection of handpicked specimens were exhibited alongside each other. The collections-based material provided a connection to actual scientific specimens and aimed to extend the accessibility and interpretation of the NSC.

The data label information for each photographed specimen was transcribed as an extended caption and displayed alongside the related photograph. As seen, this scientific data aimed to link back to *their* individual landscape. The 24 final research outputs were hung across two adjoining galleries and each room had a curated glass floor cabinet with selected Zoology specimens (BMG), see fig.27. The visitor numbers totalled 2468.

The other venue is for specialist photography and art-world orientated in a major Scottish city centre. The audience again is mixed but tends to be more art-focused. Street level Photoworks Glasgow, describes itself as providing, ‘... a high quality artistic programme ... that is challenging and accessible, local and international, diverse and highly individual (Street Level, 2016: online).

---

<sup>49</sup> The Manor House has since closed due to the impact of government cuts across the arts cultural sector and its future remains uncertain as a local and regional cultural asset.



Fig.27. Final research outputs. The Manor House, Ilkley. (17 December 2013 – 5 March 2014)

At Street Level Photoworks, *Re: Collections* and *A Rare Visitor* by Ulla Schildt showed simultaneously in separate galleries (30 January 2016 – 27 March 2016). Her work is an ongoing study of natural history museums and zoos where 'nature' has been artificially constructed for people to experience it safely and easily' (Street Level, 2016: online).

Malcolm Dickson (Director of Street Level) selected *Re: Collections* at Format Photography Festival (Derby 2014). He sought a 'natural' gallery companion at another international photography festival with Ulla Schildt. Dickson's curatorial review, selection and validation further disseminated *Re: Collections* to a wider and more photographically informed audience and placed the predominantly 'local' themed exhibition within a national photographic context. The visitor numbers totalled 3629 after a two-month run (data from Street Level Photoworks).



Fig.28. Final edit. Street Level Photoworks, Glasgow (30 January 2016 – 27 March 2016)

### 5.11 Public and Peer Review:

The presentation of the work was appropriate to these varied contexts (see above) and the audience feedback varies between the two. At the Manor House, feedback tended to focus on *content*, with more general recognition of *aesthetics*. For instance:

- ‘A moving insight into the secret world around us.’
- ‘Beautiful collection. I feel I could touch the birds ... the black background giving the subject, clarity.’
- ‘... wonderful photography interesting both artistically and from a conservation point of view.’

At Street level Photoworks, the audience appear to address the photographic context and conceptual elements with more precision. The comments endorse the research aims in terms of the transformative properties of photography, aesthetics, value judgements (beautiful & sublime), the repositioning of existing collections and making the connection between historic painterly traditions. Extracts from the public review include:

- ‘The diffuse lighting suggest oil painting textures.’
- ‘The chiaroscuro effect draws the viewer in a confronting manner. Superb!’

Some of the feedback seems to have an emotive connection to the photographs and implies an association with the material object (specimen) as an object of nature:

- ‘The countless tragedies of these beautiful creatures, “Flew into a window in Cottingley, Found dead at the roadside of A499” and the goose “found shot on the shore” are rendered into elegies in your work.’
- ‘This is a beautiful example of photography’s association with death and yet they appear to be alive!’
- ‘There’s a strange suspension of time in these animals – they are so intact from the point at which their life stopped and then the point at which the photograph was taken.’

These very different exhibition contexts and their unique diverse audiences demonstrated that *Re: Collections* had a broad cultural appeal beyond the commissioner’s original regional museum context. The research outputs made connections that challenged different audiences (even photographers) to question their existing knowledge around experimental photographic strategies and photographic *seeing*, this happened at both venues.

At the Manor House *Re: Collections* connected and engaged predominantly with a local audience, for example, connecting with Gilbert White’s vernacular view, and revealed unseen aspects of the local familiar landscape and its natural history in unfamiliar ways, when re-visioned photographically and contextually. However, even before its official opening *Re: Collections* met with controversy as, ‘The Friends of the Manor House’, protested about the ‘dead animal’ content and its suitability for children BMG resolved the matter by reminding the friends that the exhibition content reflected the diversity of BMG own collections.

Furthermore a national newspaper (The Independent) ran an article on *Re: Collections* whilst at the Manor House again suggests that, when aesthetically and photographically reinterpreted, the local has a cultural currency and national interest beyond the local.

The writer Michael Prodger responds to *Re: Collections* in a private email: he writes:

... Pink-footed goose is unequivocally dead. The others you have given a strange half-life, lit as if a strobe had caught them in the darkness. The fox image in particular is extraordinary – such a strong shape ... and such delicate texture. At first glance I didn't notice the strange almost dainty position of the paws. I love the way it hovers between the representative and the abstract. You refer in your text to the Dutch still-life tradition and I think you have been clever here. One of the things I find difficult about the painting of artists such as Snyders is the sheer amount of dead game he put in his pictures. The sense of massacre means that it is hard to look at the more formal qualities of his hares, partridges etc. By isolating them as you have done it allows the viewer to focus without being overwhelmed ... You have caught their very smallness so well. I like too the small details: the slight and unnatural kink in the wood mouse's tail, the way the kingfisher looks you in the eye over its shoulder. All the pictures have a sense of Victoriana updated that is very strong.

(Prodger, 2013: private email)

In pointing out the 'sense of Victoriana updated', his review identifies the extensive visual research from the Victorian period that has formed this work and the previous case study. This collections-based research clearly informed my contemporary photographic eye.

Similar qualities were identified in a review in The Herald newspaper published to coincide with the exhibition at Street Level. The review commented specifically on the paradoxical lifelike qualities of the *Barn Owl* photograph:

Do not be fooled. This barn owl is no more. It is not pining for the fjords. This owl has ceased to be. It has expired, gone to meet its maker. Its metabolic processes are now history... Fauna caught in lifelike actions yet all the while dead... A memento mori ...

(The Herald, 2016)



### 5.12 Summary and Evaluation:

The BMG collection's cultural value extends far beyond its original scientific context. The collections have an embedded cultural value, scientific and non-scientific. The once publicly inaccessible hidden reserve collection is re-positioned by a local photographer and given a national context and audience, through dissemination by exhibition, publication and peer review. The practice-led research referenced the natural science collections material directly, with selected zoology specimens and categorised scientific data and used experimental photographic methodologies to extend the collections original non-arts context.

The specimen's actual scientific histories are used to measure and evaluate landscape change. In *Re: Collections* photography shifted our perceptions on the real and unreal, beautiful, sublime and uncanny, the photographic visualisations re-imagined and our attention is drawn to the specimen's larger than life re-visualised *natural* detail.

The photographs capture the material remains of nature and the exactitude of taxidermist, in unexpected ways whilst posing questions around photographic *seeing*. The practice-led ideas were underpinned by photographic theory of Barthes and Benjamin, prompting questions relating to *our* interpretation of a photograph, this is evidenced in both the peer and public review (Reference 9.6 & 12.4 'Research Evidence') (RA 1, 2,3,4,5,6/RO 2,3,4,5,6).

## **6. Summary and contributions:**

The research described here has been possible in part thanks to the rich cultural and natural history resources available to me as an artist-researcher based in Bradford. Locality has been an important factor throughout the practice-based research, beginning with a woodland that is literally on my doorstep, moving to wider landscape-based locations across the North of England and coming back to Northern-based historic collections of national (and international) significance.

All the case studies in the commentary have benefited from the breadth of curatorial knowledge and the resources of the region. However, at the time of writing the critical commentary, access to the Royal Photographic Society Collection based at Insight at the NMM<sup>50</sup>, Bradford and the Manor House, Ilkley closed their doors to the public. Politics and the sobering age of austerity bites hard on the cultural sector in the north of England and this could leave the wider northern region culturally short-changed. Journalist Dean Kirby of The Independent reflects on the impact of these central government cuts, he writes:

The North of England is in danger of becoming a cultural wasteland as town hall leaders, struggling to cope with George Osborne's austerity measures, are forced to slash budgets for museums, heritage campaigners have warned.

(Kirby, Online: 2016)

### **6.1 Summary and reflection on research aims and objectives:**

- All the research outputs use photographic visualisation and theory to explore and extend the complexities of our understanding of the northern landscape and its natural history. (CS 1–3)
- The practice-based methodologies identified in the commentary outline the different aspects to my research practice: working within constraints and

---

<sup>50</sup> The National Media Museum, Bradford in 2013 was threatened with complete closure and had a reprieve in the same year due to a national protest campaign. At the time of writing the Royal Photographic Society Collection at museum will be moved to the Victoria and Albert Museum.

limitations, qualities of light (natural and artificial), extended exposure, camera and camera-less strategies and collection based research. (CS 1–3)

- Traditional and contemporary print methodologies extend the possibilities of photographic visualisation and audience engagement. CS 1–3)
- The research has drawn on and explored key aspects of photographic discourse (photographic seeing and visualising the unseen). (CS 1–3)
- The research has contributed new associations between historic painterly traditions and contemporary photography. (CS 2–3)
- The research highlights the cultural value and significance of collections based research so as to reposition historic photographic traditions in a contemporary context. (CS 2–3)
- The research highlights the cultural value and significance of non-photographic archival collections and their reanimation for new audiences through contemporary practice. (CS 2–3)
- The continued commissioning and curatorial interest demonstrates the value of the wide ranging photographic research and its dissemination to diverse audiences (national and regional). (CS 1–3)
- The significance of the contribution to photography is also measured through peer recognition by international nominations to photographic awards. (CS 1–3)
- The overall research links to a wider cultural context and the value of the ordinary by demonstrating links with nature writing, conservation and environmental discourses. (Lit. Review and CS 1-3)

## 6.2 Contributions and recognition:

Dracup is well versed in the history of photography (and the history of art) and subscribes to a different conception of what the camera can do. Her pictures – photographs seems too narrowly descriptive a word for them – are not about capturing a particular moment in time but about timelessness.

(Prodger, 2016, p. 4)

The critical commentary maps the existing research trajectory and charts the overall research contributions against three original bodies of research. The practice-led research methodologies acknowledge the continued development of an adaptable and multi-faceted *modus operandi*, which is transferable to future research. The commentary evidences the broad curatorial recognition and esteem from photographic curators and non-photographic curators. The research also recognises the investment from the commissioning institutions and continued support from the Arts Council England across all the case studies. The Arts Council has its own rigorous assessment criteria and, as seen, in time of austerity any funding is hard won, along with any art gallery and museum commission.

The research and the research outputs have established a professional framework and formed strong associations with national and regional institutions, across arts and science disciplines. These links have been developed over time and through industrious photographic practice.

*Sharpe's Wood* transforms a local nocturnal landscape through the singularity of the extended exposure, into the realms of 'truth and illusion' and our personal and collective memory. As seen, this parochial landscape continues to be photographically positioned within a regional and national context. The traditional painterly aesthetic associations of the final research outputs led to the next case study.

*Chasing the Gloaming's* association with Victorian painter Atkinson Grimshaw positioned the research within a broader, non-photographic arts context and

opened the research up to new audiences and established new methodologies. Curatorial re-positioning led to new audiences (over 133,6040) at York Art Gallery, through painterly tradition associations with Dutch and Flemish masters. In this way, the photographic research links to traditional aesthetic dimensions of the beautiful, sublime and uncanny, translated from a phenomenological experience, or a painterly tradition, into a photographic visualisation.

*Re: Collections* further re-positioned a local museum's scientific collection within a regional and national context through exhibition and media coverage. As with *Chasing the Gloaming*, access to invaluable research photographic collections in Bradford was invaluable to the research. My research demonstrates how collections are brought to life through interpretation, accessibility and dissemination. Collections based research creates opportunities for photographic research and makes a valid contribution to the national arts and culture.

However, as seen, the arts across the UK and particularly in the north are in a time of flux. Funding and closure not only effects institutions but individuals. The National Media Museum lost specialist knowledge when it made the curators of *Insight* redundant and their expert knowledge informed parts of the research trajectory.

Each of the case studies has at least one publication as a lasting documented legacy of the research and to widen the dissemination and context of the research. My artist website (<http://www.lizadracup.co.uk>) also makes the research readily accessible to a growing national and international audience.

The research has an on-going contemporary context through exhibition and conferences; for example, at the time of writing, it is approaching a decade since the reopening of Impressions Gallery in York (2007). I have been commissioned to produce a retrospective exhibition to mark this anniversary, showcasing selected works from all three cases studies as well as more recent outputs.

The American writer Rebecca Solnit recognises how an artist's work can affect our understanding of 'the world in which it first appeared' (Solnit, 2007, p. 226). In *Storming the Gates of Paradise*, she writes:

There are two kinds of artist success. One makes an artist's work distinctive and recognizable to a large public ... The greater success is paradoxical: the work becomes so compelling that it eventually becomes how we *see* and imagine, rather than what we look at.

(Solnit, 2007, p.226)

Solnit's dualistic ideas around 'artist success' align with my own research aims and objects. There is evidence to suggest within the peer and public review (see 7.7, 9.6 & 10.5 research '*Evidence Box*') that an individual's interpretation of the research outputs can connect with their imagination and consciousness and this in turn can impact and extend their perceptions and understanding of photography and its subjects.

### **6.3 Longer-term research aims:**

- A hardback publication of *Sharpe's Wood* (with additional unseen material).
- To further disseminate the existing and future research outputs nationally and internationally.
- To investigate new individual and collaborative commissions within a photographic and non-photographic context.
- To disseminate the existing and future research through academic conferences and context in the UK and internationally.
- To utilise and develop practice-led research methodologies and establish new areas of investigation and professional contexts.



#### 6.4 Continuing Contributions:

She is attracted too by the local: “Local is interesting”, she says, and she admires figures who, like the 18th-century pastor naturalist Gilbert White of Selborne in Hampshire, were deeply embedded in their own patch of the country. By her own admission she is wedded to the north of England and the challenge she has set herself is to find the unfamiliar beneath the familiar. This exhibition then is not just about Dracup's response to the Mercer's archive but about threads: those that link her own work, past and present; those that link her to previous photographers; those that link her to a place; and above all those that link her – and the viewer – to scenes and subjects that resonate with an indefinable sense of mystery.

(Prodger, 2016, p. 12)



Fig.29. *Ilkley Moor (night)* 2016. *Landmarks* 2016

The research outlined in the previous case studies has in turn enabled new and continuing projects. *Landmarks* (2016) is an exhibition and publication (with preface essay from Michael Prodger) sponsored by the Arts Council England. The

final research outputs will be shown in the North Gallery at the Mercer Art Gallery, along with a retrospective of the painter and Keeper of Arts at the Royal Academy, Eileen Cooper in the main gallery, from 17 September 2016 to 8 January 2017. *Landmarks* is the result of a commission from the Mercer Art Gallery in late 2015 to respond to their extensive historic photographic archive, which holds a diverse collection of photographic works from the pioneer Julia Margaret Cameron to the contemporary artist Tacita Dean, and many other named and anonymous photographers. The Mercer's photographic collection is a fascinating time capsule, which exposes a broad range of historic photographic methodologies, layered with visual and written references to social and political history.

*Landmarks'* research trajectory adopts and extends the possibilities of the research methodologies of the previous case studies. The Mercer collections-based commission widens the dissemination of their historic collections and my photographic contributions to a non-photographic audience and further tests the research questions, aims and objectives in the critical commentary.

The unique position of the photographic practice is constructed around a long established personal, subjective and professional connection to [my] northern landscape. My research has demonstrated how personal and geographically close (northern) landscapes can resonate and connect with a wider audience through photography. Ideas formed around a local and regional context can reach audiences far and wide, with selected works nominated for two prestigious international photography awards, placing the local and north of England landscape on an international platform.

The subjective visualisations started in a particular local woodland and established photographic methodologies that went beyond generic description of place. As seen, the peer review directed the research into new northern landscapes, and subsequently into archives and collections across photographic, historic painting and scientific disciplines. Each case study built on and broadened the previous research connections and extended audience

engagement across the United Kingdom, and with international audiences through publications, award nominations and through digital (on-line) dissemination.

My unique position has been recognised through processes of on-going peer and curatorial review. This has resulted in bespoke commission opportunities, whereby a curator has seen previous research outputs and made a direct commission approach as a result. The documented peer review and commissioning is a further demonstration and validation of the contributions made by my photographic research.

The contributions to contemporary landscape photography are embedded and established, through the synthesis of various experimental methodological research pathways. As seen the syntheses of the experimental research methods form a direct response to the landscape and collections that preserve it. In doing so I have established a unique, on-going, personal and subjective photographic syntax, to visualise and transform the landscape and natural history of [my] northern England.

### **6.5 Future contributions:**

- *Field Work*: Ten years of Photography by Liza Dracup Impressions Gallery, Bradford (7<sup>th</sup> July -23<sup>rd</sup> September 2017) *Sharpe's Wood, Chasing the Gloaming, Re: Collections, Landmarks* and other works (a touring exhibition).
- Lecturer in Photography at Bradford School of Art (1998-to date) and a visiting lecturer at other educational institutions across the UK.
- *Northern Light: Landscape Photography and Evocations of the North*. (conference, publication and website) Sheffield Hallam University (forthcoming).

- Artist and curatorial discussion around collections-based research with Jane Sellars (curator) and Greg Hobson (freelance curator and former Curator of Photographs NMM 1984 - 2016) Mercer Art Gallery (21 October 2016).
- In development: collaboration and exhibition tour with *Re: Collections* and *Dodoquest* by Dr Charlie Meecham at photographic and non-photographic venues across the UK.
- In development: A proposed photographic commission for a northern England heritage centre.

## Bibliography:

Alexander, J.A.P. (2015) *Perspectives on Place. Theory and Practice of in Landscape Photography*. Bloomsbury. London.

Art in Yorkshire. (2011) *Moonlight. (Chasing the Gloaming. Liza Dracup)*. [Online] Available: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WWIKzcA-9EI> [12 April 2015]

Art on Yorkshire (2011) *Art in Yorkshire. The Tate. Atkinson Grimshaw: Painter of Artist Newsletter. Events. Chasing the Gloaming*. 16 February 2011 [Online]. Available: <https://www.a-n.co.uk/events/liza-dracup-chasing-the-gloaming> [30 September 15]

Ashfield, A. (ed.) and De Bolla, P. (1996) *The Sublime. A reader in British Eighteenth Century Aesthetic Theory*. Cambridge University Press.

Atlee, J. (2011) *Nocturne. A Journey in Search of Moonlight*. David Krut Publishing, p.68

Baker, S. (2000) *The Postmodern Animal*. Reakin Books. London.

Barnes, M. (2010) *Shadow Catchers*. V&A, Merrell, London.

Barnes, M. & Best, K. (2006) *Twilight. Photography in the Magic Hour*. Merrell.

Barthes, R. (2000) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. New Ed. Vintage Classics. pp. 8, 57 & 79.

Barthes, R. (1984) *Elements of Semiology*. Hill and Wang. New York. p. 90

Barthes, R. (1993) *Images, Music and Text*. Translated by Stephen Fontana Press; New edition.

Batchen, G. (1999) *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography*. USA MIT Press.

Bates, H.E. (2011) *Through the Woods*. Little Toller Books. Dorset.

Battersby, M. (2010) *An Eerie Vision of the Forest at Night*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/features/an-eerie-vision-of-the-forest-at-night-2128580.html?action=gallery> [12 April 2015]

Benjamin, W. (1979) 3<sup>rd</sup> Impression. *Illuminations*, Ed. Hannah Arendt. trans. Harry Zorn, Fontana/ Collins. Glasgow, pp. 236-239

Bogard, P. (2013) *The End of the Night. Searching for Natural Darkness in an Age of Artificial Light*. Fourth Estate. London.

Bradford Environmental Action Trust (2016) [Online]. Available: [http://www.beat.org.uk/web/?page\\_id=62](http://www.beat.org.uk/web/?page_id=62) [31 May 2016]

Bradford Museums and Galleries. (2013) *Re: Collections MANOR HOUSE ART GALLERY & MUSEUM SAT 14 DEC 2013 - SUN 2 MAR 2014* [Online]. Available: <http://www.bradfordmuseums.org/whats-on/re-collections> [30 September 2015]

Bragg, M. *In Our Time. The Sublime*. BBC (2004) [online] Available: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p004y23j/broadcasts> [30 September 2015]

Brougher, K. and Muller-Tamm, P. (2010) *Hiroshi Sugimoto*. Hatje Cantz Verlag, Germany.

Buck-Morss, S. (1991) *The Dialectics of Seeing. Walter Benjamin and The Arcades Project*. The MIT Press. London England, p. 158

Burke, E. (1957) *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*. Routledge, London.

Burke, E. (1990) *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*. Routledge, London, pp. 79 & 102

Cage, John. (1987) *J.M.W. Turner. 'A Wonderful Range of Mind'*. Yale University Press.

Charmers, G. (ed.) (2007) *Sharpe's Wood*. Portfolio Catalogue Vol.45, pp. 40-43

Charmers, G. (ed.) (2007) *Sharpe's Wood*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.portfoliocatalogue.com/45/> [30 September 2015]

Collier, M. (2011) *An evaluation of the link between abstraction, representation and language within the context of current theories of Environmental Aesthetics and Phenomenology*. University of Sunderland.

Cooper, T. J. (1992) *Between Dark and Dark*. Graeme Murray. Edinburgh.

Cooper, T.J. (2003) Personal Communication. Inversnaid Photography Workshop. Inversnaid, Scotland.

Cooper, T. J. (1988) *The Gokstadt*. Graeme Murray. Edinburgh.

Cooper, T. J. (2003) *Some Rivers, Some Trees, Some Rocks, Some Sea*. Il Prisma Galleria D'Arte, Milano.

Cooper, T. J. (2004) *Point of No Return*. Haunch of Venision. London.

Cooper, T. J. (2014) *Scattered Waters*. Ingleby Gallery. Edinburgh.

- Crocker, M. (2015) *Death of the naturalist: why is the "new nature writing" so tame?* [Online] Available: <http://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2015/06/death-naturalist-why-new-nature-writing-so-tame> [10 March 2016]
- Culture Company. (2002) *One Landscape Many Views. Photography and New Commissions*. (Unseen exhibition). The Culture Company, n.p.
- Davidson, P. (2016) *The Idea of North*. Reaktion Books |ltd, London, p. 9.
- Deakin, R. (1998) *Wild Wood. A Journey Through the Trees*. Hamish Hamilton, p. x
- Deakin, R. (2008) *Notes from Walnut Tree Farm*. Penguin Books.
- De Bolla, P. (1989) *The Discourse of the Sublime: History, Aesthetics and the Subject*. Blackwell, Oxford.
- De Bolla, P. (1989) *Art Matters*. Harvard University Press. Blackwell, Oxford
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. (2013) *Artificial Light in the Environment Policy Update. December 2013* [Online]. Available: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/269402/pb14108-artificial-light-progress-dec2013.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/269402/pb14108-artificial-light-progress-dec2013.pdf) [22 December 2015]
- Denison, S. Blog. HEREFORD PHOTOGRAPHY FESTIVAL 2010 [Online]. Available: Various venues, Hereford <http://www.simondenison.co.uk/writing/18.html> (12 April 2015)
- Deutsche Boerse. [Online]. Available: [https://deutsche-boerse.com/dbg/dispatch/en/kir/dbg\\_nav/corporate\\_responsibility/33\\_Art\\_Collection/25\\_photography\\_prize](https://deutsche-boerse.com/dbg/dispatch/en/kir/dbg_nav/corporate_responsibility/33_Art_Collection/25_photography_prize) Other reference material [7 December 2015]
- Diehl, T.A. (2016) *Unconscious Journey. Tacita Dean in conversation with Travis A. Diehl*. Aperture 222.
- Dracup L. (2016) Liza Dracup website [Online]. Available: <https://lizadracup.co.uk> [28 September 2016]
- Dracup, L. (2016) *Landmarks*. Mercer Art Gallery. Harrogate.
- Dracup, L (2013) *Re: Collections*. Self-published. Bradford.
- Dracup, L. (ed) McNeill Anne. (2007) *Sharpe's Wood*. Impress book. Impressions Gallery. Bradford.
- Dyer, G. (2007) *The Ongoing Moment*. Abacus. London.



- Farley, P. and Roberts, M. (2012) *Edgelands: Journeys into England's True Wilderness*. Vintage. London
- Fox Talbot, W.H. (1969) Intro. Beaumont Newhall. *The Pencil of Nature*. Da Capo Press, New York. Plate XIII.
- Freud, S. (2003) *The Uncanny*. Penguin. p.124
- Gaffney, Sheila. [Online]. Available:  
Website:<http://www.sheilagaffney.com/index.php?/reading-room/other-essay/>  
[ 2 February 2016]
- Gilbert-Rolf, J. (1999) *Beauty and the Contemporary Sublime*. Allworth press. New York
- Green, D. (editor) (2003) *Where is the Photograph?*. Photoforum and Photoworks. Brighton
- Green Public Procurement. Street Lighting and Traffic Lights. Technical Background Report. (2011) [Online]. Available:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/pdf/tbr/street\\_lighting\\_tbr.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/pdf/tbr/street_lighting_tbr.pdf) [assessed 3 June 2016]
- Griffiths, C. (2010) *Hereford Photography Festival [Festival Catalogue] Sharpe's Wood*. Hereford Photography Festival, p.
- Halliday, J. *North Yorkshire council backs first UK fracking tests for five years*. [Online]. Available:  
[http://www.theguardian.com/environmnet/2016/may/24/anti-fracking-activists-declare-war-north-yorkshire-ruling-kirby-misperton?CMP=tw\\_t\\_gu](http://www.theguardian.com/environmnet/2016/may/24/anti-fracking-activists-declare-war-north-yorkshire-ruling-kirby-misperton?CMP=tw_t_gu) [23 May 2016]
- Hamilton, A. (2014) *Distorted Scans of Natural History* [Online]. Available:  
<http://hyperallergic.com/156406/ann-hamiltons-distorted-scans-of-natural-history/> [18 January 2016]
- Harding, C. (2013) *I Is For Instantaneous... Capturing Movement For The Very First Time*. [Online]. Available:  
<http://blog.nationalmediamuseum.org.uk/photography-a-z-instantaneous-photography-capturing-motion/> [6 August 2016]
- Harris, A. (2010) *Romantic Moderns. English Writers, Artists and the Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper*. Thames and Hudson, London.
- Hayman, R. (2003) *Trees: Woodlands and Western Civilization*. Hambledon and London.
- Henry, P. (2003) *Fabula*. National Museum of Photography, Film and Television. Bradford. England.

Herrmann, P. (2015) *Red Eye. Opinion Photography in the North of England* [Online]. Available: <https://www.redeye.org.uk/opinion/photography-north-england> [30 September 15]

Hoare, P. (2016) *The Naming of the shrew: Language landscape and new-nature writing*. 19.3.16 [Online] Available: <http://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2015/03/naming-shrew-language-landscape-and-new-nature-writing> [19 March 2016]

Ilkley Arts Trail. (2013). [Online]. Available: <http://ilkleyarttrail.co.uk/liza-dracup-2013/the-pheasant-2010/> [30 September 2015]

Inversnaid Photography Centre. (n.d.) [Online]. Available: <http://www.inversnaidphoto.com/welcomef.htm> [30 September 2015]

Impressions Gallery. (2007) *Made in England. First Impressions*. [Online]. Available: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/bradford/content/articles/2007/08/17/impressions\\_opening\\_bradford\\_feature.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bradford/content/articles/2007/08/17/impressions_opening_bradford_feature.shtml) [30 September 2015]

Impressions Gallery (2006) *Light Night 2006: Sharpe's Wood Liza Dracup*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.impressions-gallery.com/exhibitions/exhibition.php?id=9> Available: [30 September 2015]

Impressions Gallery. (2007) *Liza Dracup 'Sharpe's Wood' exhibitions Impressions Gallery* [Online]. Available: <http://balticplus.uk/liza-dracup-sharpes-wood-c17875/> [30 September 2015]

Impressions Gallery (2007) *Sharpe's Wood. Brochure*. [Online]. Available: [http://www.impressions-gallery.com/\\_lib/\\_user\\_files/Web\\_Liza%20Dracup%20Touring%20Brochure.pdf](http://www.impressions-gallery.com/_lib/_user_files/Web_Liza%20Dracup%20Touring%20Brochure.pdf) [30 September 15]

Impressions Gallery (2010) *Liza Dracup / Sharpes Wood / Impressions Gallery*. [Online] Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bo9daY8QUcA> uploaded [12 April 2015]

Impressions Gallery. (2007) *Exhibitions Past. Sharpe's Wood*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.impressions-gallery.com/exhibitions/exhibition.php?id=3> [30 September 15]

Jeffrey, I. (1999) *Revisions. An Alternative History of Photography*. National Museum of Photography, Film and Television. Bradford, p.7

Johnson, W. (ed.) (1982) *Journals of Gilbert White*. Futura, Macdonald & Co. London & Sydney.

Kant, I. (1997) *Observations on the feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*. Translated by John Goldthwait. University California Press Ltd. London

Kirkby, D. (2016) *North of England 'at risk of becoming cultural wasteland' with museums hit by austerity measures*. 11 March 2016 [Online]. Available: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/north-of-england-northern-powerhouse-george-osborne-cultural-wasteland-museums-are-hit-by-austerity-a6926321.html>

Landscape North. Sharpe's Wood. 14th October 2012 by OTHER WORLDS <http://thegalleryatflannels.blogspot.co.uk/2012/10/landscape-north.html> [accessed on 30.9.15]

Leach, E. (ed.) (2007) 'The Gallery. Sharpe's Wood', *Yorkshire Life*, September, pp. 138-140.

Leach, E. (ed.) (2011) 'The Gallery. Chasing the Gloaming', *Yorkshire Life* pp. 220-222

Leach, E. (ed.) (2013) 'The Gallery. 'Re: Collections'', *Yorkshire Life*, December pp. 77-79

Leach, E. (ed.) (2014) 'Re: Collections', *Yorkshire Life*, January, pp.72-73

Leach, E. (ed.) (2013) *Yorkshire Photography. Liza Dracup* Yorkshire Life. 25.10.13 [Online]. Available: [http://www.yorkshirelife.co.uk/out-about/yorkshire\\_photography\\_liza\\_dracup\\_1\\_3022066](http://www.yorkshirelife.co.uk/out-about/yorkshire_photography_liza_dracup_1_3022066) [30 September 2015]

Lewis, W. University of Sunderland. (2013) *WALK University of Sunderland's Walking, Art, Landskip and Knowledge research group. Light in the Darkness – An Interview with Photographer*. [Online]. Available: <http://walk.uk.net/portfolio/light-in-the-darkness-an-interview-with-liza-dracup> [30 September 2015]

Llewellyn, N. and Riding R. (eds.), (2013) *The Art of the Sublime*, Tate Research Publication, London. January 2013, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/contents-r1141440>, [Online]. Available: [30 September 2015]

Kidd, M.C. (2006) Telegraph and Argus. *Liza Will show you the Light*. 8 September 2006. [Online]. Available: [http://www.thetelegraphandargus.co.uk/news/local/localbrad/914450.Liza\\_will\\_show\\_you\\_the\\_light/?ref=arc](http://www.thetelegraphandargus.co.uk/news/local/localbrad/914450.Liza_will_show_you_the_light/?ref=arc) [30 September 2015]

Kingston, A. (2013) *3Am*. Bluecoat Press. Liverpool University Press and Bluecoat. Liverpool.

Lambirth, A. (2011) *Melancholic visions EXHIBITIONS Atkinson Grimshaw Painter of Moonlight and Chasing the Gloaming Liza Dracup* [Online]. Available: <http://www.spectator.co.uk/arts/exhibitions/7308123/melancholic-visions/> [12 April 2015]

- Mabey, R. (2010) *The Unofficial Countryside*, Little Toller Books, Dorset, p. 19
- Mabey, R. (2006) *Gilbert White. A Biography of the author of The Natural History of Selborne*. Profile Books. London
- MacFarlane, R. (2015) *Landmarks*, pp. 3 & 62
- MacFarlane, R. (2007) *The Wild Places*. Granta and Penguin Books, p.104
- MacFarlane, R. (2011) Personal email communication. [24 October 2011]
- MacFarlane, R. (2003) *Mountains of the Mind: A History of a Fascination*. London and New York: Granta Books and Pantheon Books.
- MacFarlane, R. (2015) Why we need nature writing. [Online]. Available: <http://www.newstatesman.com/culture/nature/2015/09/robert-macfarlane-why-we-need-nature-writing> [10 March 2016]
- Maitland, S. (2012) *Gossip from the Forest: the Tangled Roots of our Forests and Fairytales*. Granta, p.6
- Mason, P. (1982) *A Mystery That Became a Science and Illuminated the World. The Light Fantastic*. Penguin Books.
- McFarnon, E. (2011) *Liza Dracup captures the beauty of moonlight on film*. Friday 22 April 2011. [Online]. Available: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/features/liza-dracup-captures-the-beauty-of-moonlight-on-film-2269895.html> [30 September 2015]
- McNeill, A. and Oldfield, P. (2015) *The Bigger Picture*. Impressions Gallery. Bradford.
- McNeill, A. (2014). *Photoworks. The One that Got Away. Liza Dracup*. 8 December 2014. [Online]. Available: <http://photoworks.org.uk/liza-dracup/> [18 January 2016]
- Meier, A. (2014) *Ann Hamilton's Distorted Scans of Natural History*. [Online]. Available: <http://hyperallergic.com/156406/ann-hamiltons-distorted-scans-of-natural-history/> [15 June 2016]
- Mercer Art Gallery. (2012) Award Ceremony, Classic Award, Councillor Caroline Bayliss, Harrogate, Jane Sellars, Liza Dracup, London, Mercer Art Gallery [Online]. Available: <http://harrogate-news.co.uk/2012/05/16/gallery-shortlisted-for-major-award/> [30 September 2015]
- Miller, B. (2015) *Bradford star Liza Dracup brings magic and myth of Sharpe's Wood to PM Gallery & House*. [Online] Available: <http://www.culture24.org.uk/art/photography-and-film/art311815> \ [30 September 15]

Milner, F. *The Mystery of the Self-taught Pre-Raphaelite*. In: Sellars, J. (ed.) (2011) *Atkinson Grimshaw. Painter of Moonlight*. Mercer Art Gallery. Harrogate, pp. 27-33

Mirzoeff, N. (2009) 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. *An Introduction to Visual Culture*. Routledge. London and New York, pp. 117-120

Monbiot, G. (2013) *Feral. Rewilding the Land, Sea, and Human life*. Penguin.  
Morley, S. (ed.) *The Sublime. Documents of Contemporary Art*. The MIT Press. Cambridge. Massachusetts

Mummery and Schnelle. Ori Gersht.[Online]. Available:  
<https://www.mummeryschnelle.com/pages/gersht.htm> [18 September 2016]  
New Scientist (2013) 'The Night', 30 November.

Newton, K. & Rolph, C. (ed.) (2006) *Stilled. Contemporary Still Life Photography by Women*. Fotogallery. Cardiff.

Nicolson, M. H. (1997) *Mountain Glory and Mountain Gloom. The Development of The Aesthetics of The Infinite*. University of Washington Press. Seattle and London.

Ordnance Survey. Grid North, Magnetic North and True North. [Online]. Available: <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/resources/maps-and-geographic-resources/finding-north.html> [25 January 2017]

Petry, M. (2013) *Nature Morte. Contemporary artist reinvigorate the Still-Life tradition*. Thames & Hudson.

Photography Monthly. (2010) *TWENTY - A retrospective of 20 years of Hereford Photography Festival* 22.09.10 [Online] Available:  
[www.photographymonthly.com/News-and-Reviews/2010/9/TWENTY-A-retrospective-of-20-years-of-Hereford-Photography-Festival](http://www.photographymonthly.com/News-and-Reviews/2010/9/TWENTY-A-retrospective-of-20-years-of-Hereford-Photography-Festival) [30 September 2015]

Photoworks. (2007) Spring/Summer May/October. *Sharpe's Wood*. n.p.

P.M. Gallery (2011) [ealing.gov](http://www.ealing.gov). Sharpe's Wood Liza Dracup 13 November 2010 – 8 January 2011 An Impressions Gallery Touring Exhibition. [Online]. Available: [http://www2.ealing.gov.uk/services/leisure/museums\\_and\\_galleries/pm\\_gallery\\_and\\_house/exhibitions/past\\_exhibitions/sharpes\\_wood.html](http://www2.ealing.gov.uk/services/leisure/museums_and_galleries/pm_gallery_and_house/exhibitions/past_exhibitions/sharpes_wood.html) [12 April 2015]

Press Association (2016) Rare harvest mice return to Hampshire village where they were first discovered [Online]. Available:  
<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/jan/22/rare-harvest-mice-return-hampshire-village-where-first-discovered> [1 June 2016]

- Prodger, M (2012) High50 Culture. Art sales: the five best sites. [Online]. Available: <http://www.high50.com/culture/online-art-the-five-best-sites> [7 August 2016]
- Prodger, M. (2013) Personal email communication, 12 December 2013
- Prodger, M (2016) *Liza Dracup: A Long Exposure*. In Dracup, L. (2016) *Landmarks*. Mercer Art Gallery. Harrogate, pp. 4 & 12
- Public Catalogue Foundation. Features | Atkinson Grimshaw: Painter of Moonlight 24 October 2010  
[http://www.thepcf.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/48/reference/530](http://www.thepcf.org.uk/what_we_do/48/reference/530) [30 September 2015]
- Pulver, A (2010) 20.10.10 Susan Derges's best shot [Online]. Available: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2010/oct/20/photograph-susan-derges-best-shot> [6 August 2016]
- Rackham, O. (1999) *The History of the Countryside*. London: J.M. Dent, pp.15, 25-26
- Rackham, O. (2003) *The Illustrated The History of the Countryside*. Weidenfield & Nicolson. London.
- Rackham, O. (1976) *Trees and Woodland in the British Landscape*. Aldine Press, Herts.
- Rackham, O. (2006) *Woodlands*. Collins. London.
- Robertson, A. (1996) *Atkinson Grimshaw*. Phaidon Press Limited. London.
- Rosiek, J. (2000) *Maintaining the Sublime*. Peter Lang Pub Inc.
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. (n.d.) *Population trends and conservation*. [Online} Available: [http://www.rspb.org.uk/discoverandenjoynature/discoverandlearn/birdguide/name/s/starling/population\\_conservation.aspx](http://www.rspb.org.uk/discoverandenjoynature/discoverandlearn/birdguide/name/s/starling/population_conservation.aspx) [16 November 2015]
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. (n.d.) *Legal Status*. [Online} Available: <http://www.rspb.org.uk/discoverandenjoynature/discoverandlearn/birdguide/name/s/starling/legal.aspx> [16 November 2015]
- Royle, N. (2003) *The Uncanny*. Manchester Press, p. 108
- Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts (1997) *Hiroshi Sugimoto*. Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, University of East Anglia, Norwich.
- Schama, S. (1995) *Landscape & Memory*. Harper Perennial. London.
- Scruton, R. (2009) *Beauty*. Oxford University Press. Oxford, pp. 70-73

Sellars, J. (ed.) (2011) *Liza Dracup: Chasing the Gloaming. A Photographer's response to John Atkinson Grimshaw*. In: *Atkinson Grimshaw. Painter of Moonlight*. Mercer Art Gallery. Harrogate, pp. 151-155

Sellars, J. (ed.) (2014) *Art and Yorkshire. From Turner to Hockney*. Mercer Art Gallery. Harrogate, p.46

Sellars, J. (ed.) (2015) *A Woman's Work: Women Artists in the Harrogate Fine Art Collection*. Mercer Art Gallery. Harrogate, pp. 86-87

Siddique, H. (2016) *New homes eroding green belt 'at fastest rate for 20 years'* [Online] Available:  
<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/apr/25/number-of-green-belt-homes-planned-up-200000-in-four-years> [30 April 2015]

Shaw, P. (2006) *The Sublime*. the New Critical Idiom. Routledge. London and New York.

Shepherd, N. (2011) *The Living Mountain*. Canongate. Edinburgh. London.

Solnit, R. (2007) *Storming the gates of Paradise. Landscape for Politics*. University California Press. Los Angeles, p. 226.

Sontag, S. (1979) *On Photography*. Penguin, London.

Southam, J. (2004-2016) Jem Southam: The Painter's Pool. [Online]. Available:  
[http://www.charlesisaacs.com/exhibitions/exhibit\\_info.php/7](http://www.charlesisaacs.com/exhibitions/exhibit_info.php/7) [assessed 9 August 2016]

Steward, S. (2010) *Hereford Photography Festival. Sharpe's Wood*. 10 November 2010 [online]. Available: <http://www.theartsdesk.com/visual-arts/herford-photography-festival> [30 September 2015]

Street Level Photoworks Gallery (2016) [Online] Available:  
[http://www.streetlevelphotoworks.org/event/liza\\_dracup](http://www.streetlevelphotoworks.org/event/liza_dracup) [24 May 2016]

Street Level Photoworks Gallery (2016) [Online] Available:  
[http://www.streetlevelphotoworks.org/event/ulla\\_schildt](http://www.streetlevelphotoworks.org/event/ulla_schildt) [24 May 2016]

Sugimoto, H. (1997) *Hiroshi Sugimoto*. [Exhibition catalogue] Norwich. Sainsbury Arts Centre.

Sugimoto (n.d.) Hiroshi Sugimoto [Online] Available:  
<http://www.sugimotohiroshi.com> [11 June 2016]

Sugimoto, H. (n.d.) *Past Tense Hiroshi Sugimoto: Past Tense*. [Online]. Available:  
<http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/sugimoto/> [24 March 2016]

Sugimoto, H. (2009) *Nature of Light*. Izu Photo Museum. Japan.



Taylor, J. (1994) *A Dream of England. Landscape, photography and the tourist's Imagination*. Manchester University Press. Manchester and New York.

The Tate. Pre-Raphaelites. [Online]. Available:  
<http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/p/pre-raphaelite#about> [22 January 2017]

The Tate. *Romantasm*. [Online]. Available:  
<http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/r/romanticism> [22 January 2017]

The National History Museum. Making Data Digital. [Online]. Available:  
<http://www.nhm.ac.uk/research-curation/research/informatics/creating-digital-infrastructure-science/making-data-digital/index.html> [16 November 2015]

The Prix Pictet.(2015) The global award in photography and sustainability. [Online]. Available: <http://www.prixpictet.com/about/process/> [7 December 2015]

The Tate (2007) The Art of the Sublime. [Online]. Available:  
<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/> (30 September 2015).

University of Cumbria. (2015) *Visualising the Animal Conference*. [Online]. Available: [http://www.visualisingconference.com/Vta%20schedule\\_website.pdf](http://www.visualisingconference.com/Vta%20schedule_website.pdf) [30 September 2015]

Venning, Barry (2003) *Turner*. Phaidon Press Limited. London.

Wells, L. (2011) *Land Matters: Landscape Photography, Culture and Identity*. I.B. Tauris and Co. Ltd. London

Wells, L. (ed.) (2001) 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. *Photography: A Critical Introduction*. Routledge. London.

Wells, L. (2016) 'Nordic Light, Land and Landscape', presented at *Evocation of the North*, conference Sheffield Hallam University 2016.

White, Rev, G. (1981) *The Illustrated Natural History of Selborne*. Gilbert White Museum. Webb & Bower, Exeter, England.

White, Rev, G. (1908) *The Natural History of Selborne*. Andrew Melrose, London.

White, Rev, G. (1924) *The Natural History of Selborne*. J.W. Arrowsmith, Bristol.

White, Rev, G. (ed. Walter Johnson) (1982) *The Journals of Gilbert White*. Heritage. MacDonald & Co London & Sydney.

Williams, V. (1999) *New Natural Histories*. The National Museums of Science and Industry. London.

Wikipedia. (n.d.) *Bingley St. Ives* [Online]. Available: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bingley\\_St\\_Ives](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bingley_St_Ives) [2 June 2016]

Wikipedia. (n.d.) *The Blair Witch Project*. [Online]. Available: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Blair\\_Witch\\_Project](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Blair_Witch_Project). [26 January 2016]

Williams, V. (1999) *New Natural Histories*. National Museum of Photography, Film and Television. Bradford.

Wilson, W. (2007) Art and Research. *Journal of Ideas, Methods and Contexts*. Volume 1. No. 2. Summer. *Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir in conversation with Steve Baker and Ross Birrell* (04/05/07) [Online]. Available: <http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v1n2/baker.html> [23 November 2015]

Wright, K. (2015) *Helen Sear, artist*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/features/helen-sear-artist-i-am-trying-to-slow-down-the-instantaneousness-of-the-camera-10103835.html> [12 November 2015]

Wyatt, D. (2014) *Taxidermied animals reawakened in new photographs by Liza Dracup*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/features/taxidermied-animals-reawakened-in-new-photographs-by-liza-dracup-9011194.html> [30 September 2015]

Wyatt, D. (2014) 'Portraits of frozen memories', *Radar, The Independent*, 18 January, p.5

VAM. [Online]. (n.d.) Available: <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/l/landscape-photography-jem-southam/> [9 August 2016]

Yates, Chris. (2012) *A Journey to the Heart of Nature*. Harper Collins.

York Museums (2012) [Online]. Available: blog. <http://www.ymtblog.org.uk/category/art/page/3/> [12 April 2015]

Yorkshire Cancer Centre. (2014) [Online]. Available: <http://www.yorkshirecancercentre.org.uk/pdfdocs/bexleyarts.pdf> [17 June 2016]

Yvi Magazine #5. (n.d.) Ed. Welmer Keesmaat. Contentement Art Publications. The Netherlands.

